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Dear Ms Munić, Mr Riss, Mr Gall, Ms Moldenhauer, Mr Mammana, Ms Holland,

I would like to thank you for the letter of 28 October 2021¹, addressed to me and to Executive Vice President Timmermans, concerning the forthcoming Commission high-level event on new genomic techniques. The Executive Vice President has asked me to reply on his behalf.

Firstly, I would like to stress that the Commission announced it would start “a wide and open consultation process to discuss the design of a new legal framework for these biotechnologies”² on 29 April 2021, when it published the study on new genomic techniques. The subsequent impact assessment will consider various policy options, including maintaining the status quo (application of the current legal framework for GMOs to new genomic techniques), and its outcome is open at this stage.

In this context, the high-level event taking place on 29 November is organised to allow open and transparent discussions on the Commission’s policy action on new genomic techniques. The event takes place after we have completed the consultation on the inception impact assessment and before we embark on the impact assessment proper, allowing us to feed the discussions into our continued work. As you correctly point out, the consultation on the inception impact assessment has received a high number of feedback submissions, individual or as part of organised campaigns. This demonstrates high interest and wide participation to the process from its very beginning.

¹ Our reference Ares(2021)6664077

² Press release of 29 April 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_1985

Jagoda Munić, Director, Friends of the Earth Europe
Jorgo Riss, Director, Greenpeace EU
Eric Gall, Policy Director, IFOAM Organics Europe
Heike Moldenhauer, Secretary General, European Non GMO industry association
Ivan Mammana, European Coordination Via Campesina.
Nina Holland, Corporate Europe Observatory

I would like to reassure you that the Commission has organised this event with the objective of having representatives from the various stakeholder groups that are impacted or have an interest in new genomic techniques. This includes representatives of farmers, breeders, environmental organisations, academia, scientific bodies, as well as representatives from the European Parliament, Member States, EFSA and the Commission. We have also invited representatives of sectors that do not use GMO (organic and GM-free). I am glad to note that representatives from several of the organisations that have co-signed the letter have been invited to participate and will join the panel discussions.

I trust that different viewpoints are represented as regards the Commission's policy initiative on new genomic techniques, including those who are critical of that initiative, and that we might find common ground in the light of the objectives – shared by a majority of stakeholders – of ensuring safety and exploring ways to support sustainability goals. In addition, the event is organised so that it allows contributions from the audience feeding into panel discussions.

Finally, I would like to recall that there will continue to be opportunities to express views and provide information at the various stages of the policy process, in accordance with Better Regulation principles, and in particular in the context of the impact assessment.

I welcome your active participation in these discussions.

Yours sincerely,

