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Press Release

If the Commission believes in its own report on NGTs then it must act quickly on the subject, time is short!

Copa and Cogeca welcome the main conclusions of the study requested by the European Council in 2019 and carried out by the European Commission on Novel Genomic Techniques (NGTs). This report brings scientific clarity to an essential debate, particularly regarding the ambitious goals set by the Farm to Fork strategy. NGTs bring real and concrete tools to find solutions to the present and future climatic, environmental and food security issues that we face in the European Union. If the Commission wants to be coherent, it will have to act quickly to catch up with its competitors and be on time with the implementation of the Green Deal.

The conclusions of the study¹ that the European Commission just released today on NGTs are clear. First, this study reverses the ruling of the European Court of Justice and takes a factual and science-based approach on the issue, which the previous ruling was clearly lacking. For the European Commission, these new techniques have the potential to contribute to a more sustainable food system with more resistant breeds to disease and climate change while ensuring affordable solutions for farmers and consumers. The Commission also recognises that these new techniques cannot be considered under the same 20-year-old framework set for GMOs.

Thor Gunnar Kofoed, Chair of the Seed Working Group in Copa-Cogeca, says, *"We see this study from the Commission is a true game changer for farmers and agri-cooperatives. I am convinced, as are many colleagues², that we can achieve some of the main goals of the Green Deal if we have access to simple precise mutagenesis techniques in the EU. Farmers are ready to commit to the objectives set by the European Commission as we are the first to be impacted by climate change."*

Commenting on the next steps presented by the Commission with the release of its study, Mr. Kofoed said, *"We must be realistic, this study is only the first step after years of debates already. The Commission now intends to launch a consultation process and an impact assessment on the subject. This will take time. The same time that we won't be able to catch up with if we consider the international competition or the progress of the Green Deal. In the end, it will be the farmers who will pay the price of hesitation. I ask the Commission to commit itself more strongly and quickly if it believes in the conclusions of its own report!"*

Copa and Cogeca also agree with the Commission study when considering that NGTs are a very diverse set of techniques and can achieve different results, with some plant products produced by NGTs being undistinguishable from conventionally bred plants. This is why, considering the time pressure, we urge the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament to pass the needed small regulatory changes for those simple cut precision breeding techniques in order to swiftly progress in plant breeding at a European level to address climate change.

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¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_1985

² <https://copa-cogeca.eu/Archive/Download?id=3885988&fmt=pdf>

Translations will be available in DE, ES, FR, IT, PL and RO on the Copa-Cogeca website soon.

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