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PRESS RELEASE

New GMOs: European Commission is blind to its own bias

The European Commission has held a severely biased public consultation about deregulating new genomic techniques (NGTs). This is the essence of a letter (1) sent by ENSSER and 39 non-governmental organisations to Commissioner Kyriakides today.

In the consultation, European citizens were asked for their opinions about the question if the new techniques should be exempted from the existing European legislation for genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The European Court of Justice stated, in 2018, that the NGTs are genetic modification (which the agrochemical industry had denied) and fall under the regulation. Independent scientists have shown many times (2) that the risks of NGTs are equally large, if not larger, than those of the earlier GM techniques, justifying the same, if not stricter legislation.

The European Commission has been struggling for more than ten years now with the lobby pressure from industry to deregulate NGTs. Instead of protecting food safety and freedom of choice for GM-free farmers by listening to the scientific concerns, the Commission has chosen to distribute ever more surveys and consultations and hold ever more workshops in order to justify its bias towards the industry's wish for deregulation. The latest example of this is one of the worst: some of the questions in the consultation were so badly formulated that it was not even possible to answer them unambiguously. The Technopolis Group Amsterdam designed and carried out the consultation, which was characterised by strong bias regarding the tone, content and questions and response options, which together appeared to be formulated to weaken the existing GMO regulation. ENSSER and the other organisations were also concerned about the absence of policy options in the public consultation material and the subsequent lack of transparency on this topic.

(1) https://www.global2000.at/sites/global/files/221004_OpenLetter_NGT-consultation.pdf

(2) See for instance <https://ensser.org/publications/ngmt-statement/>,
<https://ensser.org/publications/2021-publications/enssers-response-to-the-inception-impact-assessment-iaa-on-new-genomic-techniques/>,
https://ensser.org/press_release/press-release-a-distortion-of-science-and-a-danger-to-public-and-environmental-safety/