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## CEFS POSITION

### NEW GENOMIC TECHNIQUES REGULATION

CEFS, the European Association of Sugar Manufacturers, supports the development of an adapted legislative framework that would allow the uptake of plants obtained by New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) in the EU. These new techniques are an important tool for farmers to face increasing challenges such as climate change adaptation and the loss of active substances, and may contribute to the achievement of the overall Green Deal and Farm to Fork objectives.

CEFS therefore welcomes the Commission's proposal for a "Regulation on plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques and their food and feed". In particular, the distinction between plants deriving from targeted mutagenesis and cisgenesis on the one hand, and GMO products on the other hand, together with the recognition that these NGT plants can be "conventional-like", should support the development of NGTs in the EU.

To allow adequate uptake of NGTs in the EU and to avoid the creation of unintended barriers, CEFS would like to raise the following considerations:

#### TRANSPARENCY AND LABELLING

Transparency and consumer choice can be fully and sufficiently ensured by making information about the use of NGTs publicly available via public databases and registers, as proposed by the European Commission.

CEFS welcomes that Cat. 1 NGTs plants and products are exempted from the labelling and traceability requirements of GMO legislation. It is crucial that NGTs plants and products, that the Commission recognises to be "conventional-like", benefit from a similar legislative framework to the one applying to conventional plants and products. To ensure a correct uptake of NGTs in the territory of the EU, any form of negative labelling must be avoided. In addition, any additional requirement compared to the legislative framework of conventional plants and products would generate additional administrative burden for operators.

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## **FUTURE-PROOF, SCIENCE-BASED FRAMEWORK**

To fully benefit from the possibilities offered by NGTs, it will be important to have a future-proof and science-based legislative framework. Should any further communication to consumers take place on what NGTs are, and to ensure acceptance of these new techniques, all stakeholders should ensure that communication is based on sound scientific information.

CEFS regrets that some aspects of the proposal appear not to be based on science. In particular, the exclusion of NGTs in organic farming is incoherent with the recognition that NGTs can be conventional-like and is unsubstantiated by science. Furthermore, this may jeopardise the potential for the development of NGTs in the EU and the great benefits they could bring, particularly to the organic sector (e.g. increased yields, resistances or tolerances without the use of pesticides, better adaptation to climate change, etc.).

## **REGULATORY COHERENCE AND HARMONISATION**

It is important to ensure that the NGT legislation is adopted homogeneously throughout the EU. This is essential to prevent disruptions to the internal market and ensure a level playing field within the EU. Diverging rules could fragment the market, create trade barriers, and disadvantage certain Member States.

An opt-out option for Member States would reduce the size of the addressable market for NGTs. This risks reducing overall investment for the development of NGT varieties in the EU, which would stifle EU innovation and efficiency and thereby jeopardise food security. On the contrary, a unified approach to NGT legislation would support scientific progress, foster sustainable agricultural development, and strengthen food security across the EU.

In addition, an opt-out option for Member States would create uncertainty for agri-food operators and for companies investing in the development of NGT plants because the final marketability of these plants would remain unclear, both geographically, and in time. This would further undermine EU investments for the development of NGTs.

Because third countries are swiftly developing NGTs, the EU's legislative framework for NGTs should strive for regulatory consistency and coherence with third countries to support the competitiveness of EU agriculture and avoid disruptions to trade and/or administrative burden.