

# NGT proposal sparks optimism and collaboration: insights from Euractiv panel discussion

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**In the wake of the significant step taken by the European Commission concerning a proposal for NGT-derived plants for bolstering the EU's Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies, panellists representing the European Commission and EU stakeholders from the science and agricultural sectors, including Euroseeds Secretary General Garlich von Essen, shared perspectives on the potential developments of the policy proposal during a panel discussion arranged by Euractiv.**

After the European Commission published its groundbreaking proposal on NGTs back on July 5<sup>th</sup> 2023, the discussion around NGTs has come more to the forefront, involving not only engaged scientists, plant breeders and farmers but gaining traction also with EU politicians, regulators and third country representatives.

The proposal establishes a differentiation between two categories (1 and 2) of NGT-derived plants. It foresees a science-based verification process to establish whether products fall in Category 1 (to be subject to the same regulatory framework as conventional breeding products), or Category 2 where plants would fall into the scope of the GMO regulatory framework.

With regard to the NGTs proposal, the perspectives shared during EURACTIV's "New Genomic Techniques - What Lies Ahead?" event highlighted that the scientific and farming community are very much aligned when it comes to innovation in agriculture and how the uptake of NGTs could benefit both European farmers and consumers.

Panellists Klaus Berend, Acting Director at DG SANTE, European Commission, Garlich von Essen, Secretary General of Euroseeds, Thor Gunnar Kofoed, Chair of the Seed Working Group at Copa-Cogeca, and Dr Sheila Ochugboju, Director of Alliance for Science discussed about the potential of NGTs as a set of tools that may help to achieve the EU's overarching Green Deal policy objectives much faster, with better varieties, more resistant to pest and diseases, balancing crop protection use and bringing a substantial economic return for the farmers.

“There is a broad scientific consensus that these technologies have a huge potential to help with the transition towards more sustainable agriculture; there is also consensus that the resulting nature-like products do not pose any specific risks to environment and consumers. That is why more and more countries adopt a similar regulatory approach and treat them conventional plant varieties”, Euroseeds Secretary General Garlich von Essen pointed out during the discussion.

It was underlined by Thor Kofoed that farmers consider quality seed of improved varieties developed with the help of the latest breeding methods as a key input for their future ability to economically sustain the politically aspired transition to a reduced use of crop protection products and other inputs. Here, Garlich von Essen stressed that all plant varieties available on the EU market, agricultural and vegetable alike, continue to be regulated according to the specific variety authorisation and seed marketing legislation and have to comply with defined standards and quality requirements. “This is a key pillar of our EU legislation that European breeders, seed producers and farmers very much support.”, he added.

Generally, all panellists considered it important to conclude the discussions at the levels of Parliament and Council as quickly as possible and ideally before the end of the current mandate. “The time is now!”, stated Thor Kofoed underlying the urgency of the matter.



Avenue des Arts 52  
1000 Brussels

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