Veille citoyenne d'information sur les OGM et les semences

Some European laboratories call for traceability of GMOs/NGTs

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The need to be able to detect and identify GMOs obtained through new genetic modification techniques is a request that is being made more and more frequently. Following in the footsteps of associations, farmers' unions, organic and non-GMO producers and processors, as well as supermarkets, it is now the turn of some laboratories specializing in analyses to make such a demand. At a time when European legislators are discussing the possible complete deregulation of such GMOs, these positions could carry more and more weight.



At a time when the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union are discussing the Commission's proposal to deregulate a large number of GMOs by 2023, twelve laboratories in Germany, Poland, Spain, Ukraine and France have published a

letter[i] calling for all releases of GMOs in the environment to be accompanied with the methods and materials needed to detect and identify GMOs obtained by new techniques.

Essential traceability

This open letter is addressed to the European legislators who are currently discussing the deregulation of GMOs ; a deregulation which would mean, among other things, that requests for authorization to release GMOs would no longer be accompanied by the obligation to provide the methods needed to detect and identify GMOs, contrary to current legislation. Initiated by Spanish laboratory Imegen Agro, the open letter underlines the concern of the twelve signatory laboratories[ii] that "*neither the EU Commission's legislative proposal nor the position adopted by the EU Parliament provides for detection methods for category 1 NGTs*".

Involved in GMO analyses requested by their customers, these laboratories would be unable to meet the demands of customers who follow specifications that exclude all GMOs. These customers, the laboratories point out, are not only organic or non-GMO.

Assuming that the legislator may not answer this question, the laboratories ask that he at least allows them "*to develop [their] own detection methods. This requires the obligation for developers and manufacturers of category 1 NGTs to disclose reference material and information about the genetic modification, its sequence and its location*" in the genome.

In the case of category 2 GMOs/NGTs, the Commission is already proposing to make the provision of this information compulsory, so that they can be detected and identified. It does, however, provide for an exemption if manufacturers argue that it is impossible to provide such a method. The twelve laboratories support the European Parliament's position that the « *Union reference laboratory shall carry out its own research and analyses to confirm the claimed unfeasibility. In that case, the decision of the Union reference laboratory shall be motivated and be made public* ».

A repeated request

This open letter from laboratories specializing in the detection and identification of GMOs is part of a series of repeated requests from other players - associations, farmers' unions, organic and non-GMO producers and processors, supermarkets[iii] - that tools enabling the analytical traceability of GMOs/NGTs be provided on a mandatory basis.

In May and June 2025, for example, a number of French and European organizations sent letters to the European legislator. With these letters, they wished to publicly ask French and European legislators "*not to abolish labelling and traceability requirements for GMOs produced using new techniques*"[iv]. According to these organizations, the stakes are high, because maintaining these obligations is the only way to protect seed growers and farmers from contamination or claims of patent rights on living organisms by plant breeders, and to guarantee freedom of choice for farmers and consumers.

At European level, while the European Commission is proposing the end of the currently compulsory supply of methods for detecting and identifying GMOs/NGTs, arguing that it is supposedly impossible to differentiate them from other organisms that may occur naturally, it decided in December 2023 to fund two research programs. While these two programs, Darwin and Detective, aim to develop methods for the detection and identification of GMOs/NGTs, the Detective program is the work of pro-deregulation players such as Euroseeds and the European Commission itself[v]. The Commission claims that detection and identification are impossible, but

funds and participates in research programs aimed at answering this question. Not so easy to follow…

[i] Enga, « European Laboratories Join Forces To Make Urgent Call To EU Policy Makers on New GMOs », 27 June 2025.

[ii] Signatory laboratories : FoodChain ID Testing GmbH, Cotecna Ukraine Limited GmbH, CARSO - Laboratoire Santé Environnement Hygiène de Lyon (LSEHL), SGS Analytics Germany GmbH, Gen-IAL GmbH, NSF Erdmann Analytics GmbH, J.S. Hamilton Poland Sp. z o.o., SAN Group Biotech Germany GmbH, Impetus GmbH & Co. Bioscience KG, Imegen Agro - Health in Code S.L., AGQ Labs International SL, AGROLAB Ibérica S.L.U.
Among the signatories is the French laboratory CARSO - Laboratoire Santé Environnement Hygiène de Lyon (LSEHL). This laboratory is accredited for a wide range of analyses in the agri-food, environment, chemical and biological products and medical equipment sectors.

[iii] Eric Meunier, « French retailers want GMO/NGT to be regulated », *Inf'OGM*, 3 April 2024.

[iv] Eric Meunier, « Detection and identification of GMOs still demanded », *Inf'OGM*, 25 June 2025.

[v] Eric Meunier, « Traçabilité des OGM/NTG : deux programmes de recherche concurrents », *Inf'OGM*, 19 March 2024 (in French).

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