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## German authority undermining decision-making at the European Court of Justice

ZKBS committee declares that CRISPR-Cas applications for plants are not genetic engineering

30 March 2017 / At its meeting on the 7 March, the German Central Committee on Biological Safety (ZKBS) discussed applications for plants engineered using the new nuclease CRISPR-Cas gene technology. The applications were assessed at the request of the German Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL). The ZKBS came to the conclusion that not all of these plants have to be regulated under the rules for genetically engineered plants.

The ZKBS position is in direct contradiction to the assessment of other experts who concluded that these plants must be always be subjected to mandatory risk assessment. In addition, the statement as requested and presented does not take a court case currently pending at the European Court of Justice into account – the court will rule on the basic legal status of such plants. Testbiotech and other civil society organisations (CSOs) are concerned that this is an attempt to create facts before the court has had a chance to make its decision.

The Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) makes decisions on experimental field trials with genetically engineered plants. If, therefore, the BVL follows the opinion of the ZKBS, the plants could be released without further risk assessment. The ZKBS does not make it clear which species is concerned, or for which purpose the plants were genetically engineered.

Testbiotech, together with other CSOs, has sent a letter to the German Minister of Agriculture asking for information about the plants and demanding measures to prevent their release into the environment.

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**Further information:** [Der Brief an den Bundesminister für Landwirtschaft](#) [2]

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