

EFSA defends risk assessment of GE plants

The EU authority has published a report in response to the RAGES research project

15 July 2020 / The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) responded to the RAGES research project findings (Risk Assessment of Genetically engineered organisms in the EU and Switzerland) in a recently published report. The EFSA report was compiled at the request of the EU Commission. As expected, EFSA defended its current practice of risk assessment for genetically engineered plants, despite RAGES having highlighted numerous deficiencies.

Testbiotech was involved in conducting the RAGES project and welcomes the EFSA publication. According to Testbiotech, it shows that EFSA and the EU Commission are willing to discuss current risk assessment standards. However, Testbiotech does not consider the EFSA report to have settled the ongoing debate and will, within a matter of weeks, provide a detailed response to the various points and issues that EFSA addressed – as well as those that it failed to address.

The RAGES project findings are in no way invalidated by the EFSA report. While EFSA in its report has rejected criticism of its risk assessment practices, it does point to open questions and problems in current risk assessment. The EFSA report emphasises that EFSA and RAGES have reached contradictory conclusions, which is not surprising given the complexity of the scientific issues. Meanwhile, several RAGES project findings have been published after undergoing a peer review process by international journals. However, EFSA failed to acknowledge or address these publications.

It should not be overlooked that RAGES and EFSA deal with the safety of genetically engineered organisms from different perspectives: EFSA is under pressure from various stakeholders to speedily prepare new authorisations and consequently fails to prioritise the application of the precautionary principle. On the other hand, the institutions involved in RAGES analysed the risks associated with genetically engineered plants from the perspective of health and environmental protection, without having to take commercial or trade policy considerations into account.

Testbiotech is calling on the EU Commission to carry out further evaluations of the RAGES findings since EFSA cannot be expected to criticise its own work and practices from an entirely neutral point of view. Furthermore, it is important to note that it is the EU Commission rather than EFSA which should be responsible for setting the principles and general standards governing EFSA risk assessments.

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Further information: [The EFSA report](#) [2]

[The RAGES findings](#) [3]

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