

Twisted facts and incorrect assumptions about NGT plants

Misleading report published on behalf of the EU Parliament

13 October 2022 / On 20 October, the 'Panel for the Future of Science and Technology' (STOA) at the European Parliament will host a presentation of a new report on plants derived from new genomic techniques (NGT, also New Genetic Engineering or genome editing). The authors of the report "Genome edited crops and 21st century food systems challenges" and their institute, the Vlaams Instituut voor Biotechnologie (VIB), are actively lobbying to deregulate agricultural plants derived from new genomic techniques (NGTs). However, the report fails to make this background transparent.

According to a backgrounder that Testbiotech published today, STOA has contravened the basic principles of providing independent and impartial information to the European Parliament in their report. Against this backdrop, Testbiotech is warning that unless the basic principles of transparency regarding conflicts of interest are upheld, there's a danger that inadequate or hazardous technologies are promoted as 'solutions' for, e.g. world hunger, climate change or sustainable agriculture.

As it stands, the report contains many misleading statements and incorrect assumptions about NGTs that are not supported by scientific evidence. The main messages in the report can be summarised as: (1) NGT plants offer quick solutions to pressing problems and (2) the genetic changes introduced by NGTs are no different to those resulting from conventional breeding.

However, the available scientific evidence shows that the traits generated by NGTs are very often associated with 'trade-off' responses (side effects), which can make it necessary to invest a lot more time in the development of new varieties compared to conventional breeding. While NGTs, e.g. CRISPR/Cas, have huge potential to alter the genome, it is also well known that this potential does not easily translate into real benefits.

Furthermore, intended and unintended genetic changes caused by NGTs can go far beyond what can be expected from conventional breeding. Consequently, there are specific risks inherent to NGTs that may have adverse impacts on health and the environment. This is also true even if no additional genes are inserted into the genome. These differences between conventional breeding and NGTs can be easily overlooked, but can have serious consequences for health and the environment.

In summary, the Testbiotech analysis shows that the report is based on incomplete and misleading findings, resulting in incorrect messages and conclusions. Therefore, Testbiotech is demanding that STOA and the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services of the Secretariat of the European Parliament (EPRS) withdraw this report.

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Further information: [Testbiotech backgrounder](#) [2]

[STOA report](#) [3]

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