Keep gene scissors under control!

New genetic engineering needs to be strictly regulated

Many industry and research stakeholders are calling for extensive deregulation of 'new genetic engineering' (New GE). If they are successful, large numbers of various genetically engineered organisms could be released into the environment with no control. This would pose a significant threat to ecosystems, agriculture and food production.

All organisms whose genome has been altered with New GE must currently undergo a mandatory approval process. This is required by EU regulation and is in line with the findings from risk research: New GE, especially CRISPR/Cas, makes it possible to profoundly change the biological characteristics of plants and animals. This applies even when no new genes are inserted, by altering natural gene functions. In addition, the technology frequently causes unintended changes in the genome.

Many industry and science stakeholders are nevertheless demanding that most New GE plants and animals should be exempt from the mandatory approval process. To achieve this, they are demanding changes in EU GMO regulation. Such demands are, however, incompatible with the precautionary principle established in EU law to protect health, the environment and nature.

Without sufficient regulation of New GE
› severe damage to biological diversity is likely;
› risks to food production may be introduced and accumulate unnoticed;
› access to data needed for risk assessment by independent experts is not made available;
› no measures can be taken against the uncontrolled spread of the organisms in the environment;
› no data are available to track and trace the New GE organisms and products derived thereof;
› agriculture and food production relying on GE free sources can no longer be protected. This applies to both organic and conventional agriculture.

Therefore, we demand: All organisms whose genome has been genetically engineered using New GE must be subject to current EU regulation (Directive 2001/18/EG) and undergo a strict mandatory approval process. Such organisms must be identifiable, traceable and labelled. This also applies to plant and animals even if no additional genes have been inserted into the genome.