

# RAGES

## RISK ASSESSMENT OF GENETICALLY ENGINEERED ORGANISMS IN THE EU AND SWITZERLAND

### Invitation for workshop with the RAGES consortium in October 2019 in Switzerland

Organised by ENSSER, CSS, GeneWatch UK and Testbiotech *(version:15 October 2019)*

#### Background:

In 2016, the project was started by the European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility (ENSSER), Critical Scientists Switzerland (CSS), Gene Watch UK and Testbiotech. The aim is to evaluate the risk assessment of genetically engineered organisms, especially plants, as currently performed by EFSA. The evaluation is based on case studies derived from the published EFSA opinions, peer reviewed publications and additional scientific data/expertise. Within the project there are general questions the consortium tries to answer in regard to risk assessment of current usages of genetically engineered organisms in agriculture and the food chain:

- Is the current practice as established by EFSA and other European authorities adequate in terms of methodology and scrutiny to assess the risks and identify uncertainties?
- Are there general gaps or flaws?
- Are there indications or evidence that risks were not assessed correctly?

#### The Topics:

To answer these questions, the project produced a series of detailed reports on specific topics which were identified as being crucial in this context. The topics are assessment of

- health risks associated with the consumption of products derived from genetically engineered herbicide tolerant plants;
- environmental risks associated with the cultivation of Bt toxin producing plants;
- health risks associated with the consumption of products derived from genetically engineered plants that are changed in their nutritional composition;
- health risks associated with the consumption of products derived from genetically engineered plants with a combination of traits;
- environmental risks associated with genetically engineered crops that can persist and spontaneously propagate in the environment;
- risks associated with organisms derived from new genetic engineering technologies.

The draft reports were discussed with several stakeholders and experts, including experts from EFSA and EU Commission in October 2018. Now the final studies will be presented in October 2019 in Switzerland. They include case studies as well as case independent findings and general recommendations.

## The Workshop:

The workshop will be held in Switzerland at the *Université de Neuchâtel (Neuenburg)* on 29 of October 2019 (Faculty of Science, Rue Emile Argand 11, Room: Auditoire Louis Guillaume T200).

Swiss Authorities, European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the EU Commission, civil society organisations and interested public are invited to comment and discuss. Experts from institutions which want to comment will have access to the reports beforehand.

## Draft Agenda:

10.00 a.m. Introduction of the participants and some background on RAGES

10.15 a.m. Presentations by the consortium on the first three reports (15 minutes each), each presentation followed by a round of questions from the participants (10 minutes) and a first round of comments from EU and Swiss authorities (15 minutes)

1. Herbicide tolerant plants – Thomas Bøhn (ENSSER)
2. Bt insecticidal plants – Angelika Hilbeck (ENSSER & CSS)
3. Plants with changed nutritional composition – Helen Wallace (GeneWatch UK)

12.15 p.m. Lunch

12.45 p.m. Presentations by the consortium on the other three reports (15 minutes each), each presentation followed by a round of questions from the participants (10 minutes) and a first round of comments from EU and Swiss authorities (15 minutes):

1. Assessment of combinatorial effects – Christoph Then (Testbiotech);
2. Plants which can persist and propagate in the environment – Andreas Bauer-Panskus (Testbiotech);
3. New methods of genetic engineering – Janet Cotter (Logos Environmental & ENSSER) and Katharina Kawall (Project Genetic Engineering and Environment, FGU).

2.45 p.m. Discussion on overall findings and demands with all participants, starting with some first conclusions presented by Erik Millstone (Emeritus Professor at Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex) on political implications.

4 p.m. End of the workshop and goodbye snacks.

## Contact and Further Information:

### **Please register!**

For registering and questions please send an e-mail to: [info@testbiotech.org](mailto:info@testbiotech.org)

Further information: [www.testbiotech.org/en/content/research-project-rages](http://www.testbiotech.org/en/content/research-project-rages)

The project is funded by Mercator Foundation, Switzerland