

Contribution to briefing for Commissioner Kyriakides for meeting with Minister of Agriculture of Croatia Marija Vuckovic on 9 January 2020 (CAB 29)

Our objectives

GMOs and new breeding techniques: to understand the Presidency stance on future debate(s) on the new developments in biotechnology.

The interlocutor's objectives

GMOs and new breeding techniques: the Minister might express scepticism on the issue and inform on the level of commitment the Presidency intends to take on this issue.

GMOs and new genomic techniques

Line to take

- Enquire how Croatia would see the future debate(s) on the new developments in biotechnology.
- Inform that the Commission looks forward to the Member States contributions

State of play/background information

In total, 145 GMOs are authorised in the EU for food and feed uses (covering maize, cotton, soybean, oilseed rape, sugar beet). These are mainly insect resistant and/or herbicide tolerant GMOs. The EU authorisation system is science-based. Following a request from an applicant and only after a favourable risk assessment by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the Commission submits a proposal for a GMO / GM food and feed authorisation in the EU. Member States give an opinion on the proposed authorisation in a comitology procedure. Member States have never reached a qualified majority in favour or against an authorisation since the entering into force of the GM food and feed legislation in 2004.

In the last decades, advances in biotechnology have led to the development of so-called 'new genomic techniques'. Among these, the most prominent and rapidly evolving are new mutagenesis techniques, with great innovation potential and broad range of applications both in the agri-food sector and the health sector. In July 2018, the EU Court of Justice concluded that new mutagenesis products are subject to GMO legislation. This conclusion is also valid for the products obtained by other new genomic techniques.

 Croatia supported the Council Decision requesting the Commission to submit a study on new genomic techniques. The Commission is meeting with Member States experts on 15 January to discuss their contribution to the study.