

Blacked-out [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Ingredients

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Label gene-edited food!

Short version

GMO reform: Removal of labelling – Consumer protection at a critical turning point

Consumers lose orientation; reform is controversial – who benefits?

In the coming weeks, a decision at EU level could have far-reaching consequences for the European food market. Certain genetically modified plants may soon be approved without safety checks or labelling — despite repeatedly expressed consumer opposition.

Critics from consumer and agricultural organisations warn of a loss of transparency, new dependencies, and increased corporate control through patented seeds, while the European Commission presents the reform as a driver of innovation.

From our perspective, key questions for further investigation include:

- What would the removal of labelling mean in concrete terms for consumers?
- What role do major agribusiness corporations play in the legislative process?
- How do independent scientists assess the claimed precision of new techniques such as CRISPR?

Extended version

Food transparency at stake in upcoming EU decision

Soon, the European Union is expected to adopt new rules on so-called New Genomic Techniques (NGTs).

We believe this is an urgent topic that programmes such as yours should address, as it will have far-reaching implications for our food system and the structure of the European agricultural sector as a whole.

What this means in practice

If adopted, this proposal would allow many genetically modified plants to be approved without risk assessment, traceability, or labelling, provided they are classified as category 1 NGTs.

In concrete terms, this would mean:

- Simplified or effectively removed approval procedures for many genetically modified plants.
- No mandatory labelling requirements through to the final product.
- Opening the market to patentable plants with limited oversight.

These changes are being justified not by necessity, but through narratives strongly influenced by the agrochemical industry.

Journalistic relevance

This legislation is a prime example of strong lobbying influence, the dismantling of food transparency, and the loss of democratic oversight of food production — affecting consumers, farmers, breeders, and retailers alike.

Possible interview partners include European consumer organisations, consumer protection bodies, retail companies, independent scientists, and farmer organisations opposing seed patenting.

The industry narrative – and why it does not hold up

1. *“New breeding techniques are necessary for climate adaptation in agriculture.”*

There is no reliable evidence suggesting that deregulating genetic engineering will lead to climate-adapted crop varieties. There is also no “resilience” or “drought-stress” gene that can simply be switched on or off. Nevertheless, this narrative is increasingly used to justify broad deregulation.

- <https://www.bund.net/service/publikationen/detail/publication/greenwashing-in-der-gentechnikdebatte-ein-blick-auf-die-marketingversprechen-und-was-dahintersteckt>

2. ***“NGT plants are precise and harmless.”***

Scientific studies have identified chromothriptic effects following CRISPR interventions in plants, including large and uncontrolled genome rearrangements. These findings challenge claims of high technical precision and safety.

- <https://academic.oup.com/plcell/article/35/11/3957/7231994?login=false>

3. ***“NGT plants are equivalent to conventional breeding.”***

The genetic complexity and targeted nature of these interventions go far beyond what is achievable through classical breeding, making claims of equivalence scientifically questionable. The current legal definition of NGT-1 plants is also controversial, as it relies on a purely quantitative threshold (fewer than 20 gene sequences), even though in genome editing it is the nature of the genetic change — not the number of edits — that is scientifically relevant.

- https://www.preprints.org/frontend/manuscript/ccbb6ed973dbe413aa271b02ffa3a81b/download_pub

Groups affected by the proposed law

Consumers: 85% of European consumers want labelling of genetically modified foods.

- <https://extranet.greens-efa.eu/public/media/file/1/6910>

Farmers: European farmers risk becoming economically dependent on patented seeds.

Breeders: European SME plant breeders may become structurally disadvantaged in competition with large companies such as BASF, Bayer, Syngenta, and Corteva.

Contact

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