



EcoNEXUS



Brussels, 17 May 2019

Contact for IFOAM EU:

Eduardo Cuoco, Director eduardo.cuoco@ifoam-eu.org

Recipients: all Spitzenkandidaten

Subject: Work programme for the next European Commission

Dear Spitzenkandidat,

After the election of the European Parliament by the end of May, a new European Commission will be appointed in the autumn. The Commission president will be appointed from the list of Spitzenkandidaten and will have a major role in defining the work of the European Commission.

The signatories to this letter call upon the new European Commission to break with the past and to strongly and coherently address the current global crises related to biodiversity, climate, poverty and health. The EU Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems and Integrated Food Policies has made important proposals for an integrated food policy, enabling the urgent transition to a sustainable food system.

We urge you specifically to not give in to pressure from corporate lobby groups by opening existing EU legislation developed to protect human health and the environment. In particular, the biotech industry

has been pressuring the EU institutions for over a decade to get new genetic engineering techniques (such as zinc finger nucleases (ZFN), TALENs, CRISPR/Cas, meganucleases and oligonucleotide-directed mutagenesis (ODM)) excluded from the existing EU GMO rules. This means no safety evaluations, no monitoring, and no consumer/farmer/processor choice through labelling and traceability. Many different stakeholders, on the other hand, such as the organic sector¹, consumers², farmers³, the GMO-free sector⁴, retailers⁵, scientists⁶ and environmental groups⁷ have called for an adequate regulation of new genetic engineering techniques, in line with the existing legislation on GMOs. Indeed, questions have been raised as to whether other approaches are more promising to make farming more sustainable. At the same time, while patent battles on the new techniques are ongoing, civil society, farmers and breeders are demanding that patents on crops be abolished.

On 25 July 2018⁸, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) clarified the legal status of new techniques, ruling that all products from new genetic engineering techniques fall under the scope of the GMO legislation. The ruling confirms that GMOs obtained from new genetic engineering techniques must be marketed only with prior authorization, must be labelled, and require detection methods to be provided by applicants, according to Directive 2001/18/EC. European consumers, breeders, farmers, food processors and retailers have the right to know how the food that they are eating, growing, and selling was produced.

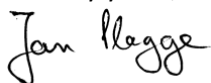
We expect the new European Commission to stand strong for people and the environment and to resist lobbying efforts intended to benefit particular interests and undermine well-founded EU laws. We encourage you to take courageous steps towards a truly sustainable food system. Public research funding should therefore only serve the public interest by helping farmers to grow healthy food on healthy soils, using locally selected, genetically diverse, and climate resilient varieties.

Specifically, we demand that the next EU Commission:

- Will not torpedo the existing GMO regulations, or undermine it while modifying the seeds legislation or shifting from a process-based system to a product-based system, but ensure they are properly implemented, strengthening safety testing rather than weakening it.
- In cooperation with Member States, will swiftly and carefully implement the ECJ ruling across all EU Member States.
- Will abolish patents on crops, plants and animals.

We are looking forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,



Jan Plagge, President of IFOAM EU

On behalf of:

Georg Janßen, National Secretary of Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL)

Joana Rocha Dias, Coordinator, ACTUAR

Bernd Kajtna, Executive Director, ARCHE NOAH

Nicolas Girod, Spokesperson, Confédération Paysanne

¹ Position of IFOAM EU and IFOAM Organics International: [The organic food and farming movements calls for the regulation of New genetic engineering techniques as GMOs.](#)

² TADC press release: [New policy resolution on consumer concerns about new genetic engineering techniques.](#)

³ European Coordination Via Campesina: [Stop new GMOs.](#)

⁴ [Open letter](#) VLOG and ARGE Gentechnik-frei.

⁵ [Open letter](#) VLOG and ARGE Gentechnik-frei.

⁶ [ENSSER](#) statement on new genetic modification techniques.

⁷ [Open letter to Commission President Juncker 2018 from different organisations from civil society.](#)

⁸ ECJ, Confédération Paysanne, [C-528/16.](#)

Nina Holland, Researcher and Campaigner, Corporate Europe Observatory
Helena Paul, Co-Director, EcoNexus
Ramona Duminiciou and Alessandra Turco, Members of the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) Coordination Committee
Sofia Monsalve, Secretary General, FIAN International
FIAN Portugal
Lanka Horstink, President of the Executive Committee, GAIA
Dr Helen Wallace, Director, GeneWatch UK
Heidmarie Porstner, GMO Campaigner, GLOBAL 2000 – Friends of the Earth Austria
Liz O'Neill, Director, GM Freeze
Claire Robinson, Editor, GMWatch
Dr. Eva Gelinsky, Policy coordinator, IG SAATGUT
John Holten-Andersen, Board Member, NOAH Friends of the Earth Denmark
Dr Hervé Le Meur, President, OGM Dangers
Marta Messa, Director, Slow Food Europe
Benedikt Haerlin, Coordinator, Save Our Seeds
Zoé Gallez, Coordinator, Terre-en-Vue
Karl Bär, Advisor on Agriculture and Trade, Umweltinstitut München e.V
Judith Hitchman, President, Urgenci International Community Supported Agriculture
Ivaylo Popov, Board Member, Za Zemiata, Friend of the Earth Bulgaria