

EU Comitology reform threatens innovation in a post-truth world

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Opinion Plus

As the world looks to Europe to lead on evidence-based decision-making, we must not let politics trump science, warns Nathalie Moll.



Unshackling Innovation: Will Europe block or enable GM crops? | Photo credit: EuropaBio

Decision-making processes for the approval of new products in the EU must provide legal certainty, and must be based on the best available science to promote growth, innovation, investment as well as consumer confidence and safety in the EU.

Our [press release](#) [1] and joint [statement signed together with 18 European associations](#) [2], published just ahead of the European Commission's legislative proposal to reform the decision-making system known as 'comitology', emphasise these concerns.

Our concerns are still the same. The current system, which is poorly implemented for GM crops, already foresees up to two member states votes on each safety-assessed product.

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The Commission has proposed to add up to two more votes, which would lengthen the procedure even further. Time and predictability are essential for company decisions and have a large impact on regional investment.

We strongly agree that member states should take their responsibility to vote in favour of approving market access for safety-assessed products.

The hypocrisy of numerous EU member states is remarkable: countries which refuse to vote in favour of GM import approvals, import GM soybeans roughly equalling the [weight of their entire populations](#) [10] each year.

Just for the record: trillions of GM meals have been eaten over the last 20 years without a single case of harm, and well over 2500 individual GM approvals have been granted by numerous governments across the world.

Politicians who continue to cast GMO safety and benefits into doubt – and deny their many benefits for farmers, consumers and the environment – should explain why they trust unfounded scaremongering more than actual facts from the [European Academies of Science](#) [11] and other trusted EU institutions like the European Food Safety Authority.

It is difficult to see how a more convoluted decision-making process will encourage countries to support innovation. The signal derived from multiple submissions of safety-assessed products to vote by member states is not one of trust in the EU's agencies and science.

Hence, the Commission proposal does not promote evidence-based decision-making. The Commission could take a much clearer stance by defending the scientific opinions of the EU's own agencies.

While the European Parliament and member states debate the comitology proposal, the Commission is legally obliged to implement the current EU legislation and decide on approvals of safe products within the legally determined timelines.

We know that in Europe politics often trumps the science. How often will politics also break existing democratically adopted law?

About the author

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