

Trust in food risk assessment essential for innovation

Written by EuropaBio on 11 April 2018 in Press Release
Press Release

EuropaBio's reaction to the EC proposal for a regulation on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain.



11 April 2018, Brussels: Responding to today's proposal by the European Commission for a regulation on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain, John Brennan, Secretary General of EuropaBio said: "Our sector supports the objective to increase connection with the public and trust in the risk assessment process. Transparency and sustainability of the EU's risk assessment, including its efficiency, consistency and robustness, are equally important to build public trust and to spur needed innovation in agriculture and food. We would like to see more transparency in the rules of procedure for risk assessment, and from Member States when it comes to whether or not they vote with the scientific evidence assessing product safety."

EuropaBio believes that elements of the Commission proposal can help to increase trust and understanding of the science behind the risk assessment opinions of EFSA and the related risk management decisions of the European Commission and Member States. To date, these decisions

have often been hampered by misunderstanding or mistrust of the system to the detriment of innovation, due in part to a lack of adequate information and in part to misinformation. Disclosure of technical information, on its own, is unlikely to improve the public understanding of science and the trust in the risk assessment process.

As stated in our position paper on transparency, EuropaBio recommends a holistic approach to strengthening trust and transparency, including when it comes to GMOs, and supports a step change in communication. Improved risk communication should do more to highlight the integrity and quality of EFSA's scientific opinions in an understandable manner, and address the spread and sources of misinformation and conspiracy theories that have eroded trust in some innovative products like GMOs. Despite a 20-year history of safe commercialisation around the world and over 2,500 separate authorisations granted by public authorities in at least 59 countries, some interest groups campaign vigorously against GM crops making unsubstantiated claims against their safety.

Concluding his statement, Mr. Brennan said: "We hope that efforts to improve public trust will go hand in hand with a move to reset the debate, learn from the past, and ensure that in the future Europe does not continue to lose out to non-fact based claims against product safety. We need to end the anomaly that the same GMOs approved in other countries in 2 years often take up to 7 years for import approval in the EU due in great part to public misperceptions about safe products that provide significant benefits(1). In this context, we hope that more transparency will help science and innovation to prosper in Europe on fair and factual grounds."

For additional information of relevance, please consult:

- The legislative proposal on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain [COM\(2018\) 179](#) [1] and the European Commission [Press Release](#) [2]. Brussels, 11 April 2018
- European Commission [Fact Sheet](#) [3] on Commission's proposal. Brussels, 11 April 2018
- EuropaBio Position Paper ["Transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment process."](#) [4] March 2018

About the author

About EuropaBio

EuropaBio, the European Association for Bioindustries, promotes an innovative and dynamic European biotechnology industry. EuropaBio and its members are committed to the socially responsible use of biotechnology to improve quality of life, to prevent, diagnose, treat and cure diseases, to improve the quality and quantity of food and feedstuffs and to move towards a biobased and zero-waste economy. EuropaBio represents 76 corporate members and 17 national biotechnology associations and bioregions.

Read more about our work at www.europabio.org [5].

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