



## PRESS RELEASE

# Decision on New Genetic Engineering: Scientific Society on Ecology (GfOE) and 100 Researchers warn against Genetic Engineering without Risk Assessment

**According to Aurelia Foundation deregulation of new genetic engineering (gene scissors) is not a smart political move, but a serious threat to biodiversity. The extinction of species in the soil and in pesticide-dependent agriculture cannot be halted in this way. The state of scientific knowledge must not be ignored when deciding on new genetic engineering.**

Berlin, 21 December 2023 | In a recent statement, the scientific Society for Ecology in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (GfOE) warns against the EU Commission's planned abolition of risk assessment for the majority of plants from new genetic engineering (NGT).

The GfOE, the world's third largest scientific society in the field of ecology, criticises the fact that the EU Commission's proposal fails to "recognise fundamental ecological principles" at the application level of new genetic engineering. In addition, the threshold definition of so-called NGT1 plants, in which no foreign genetic material is incorporated, fails to take environmental risks into account. In its statement, the GFÖ warns that the deregulation of all NGT1 plant species worldwide could pose a serious threat to the conservation of biodiversity and sustainability.,

**Matthias Wolfschmidt, Chairman of the Aurelia Foundation, explains:**

***"The GfOE statement impressively confirms that the EU Commission's proposal to deregulate new genetic engineering ignores the current state of scientific knowledge about the causes of the current environmental multi-crises. The EU's pesticide-based agricultural model will not become any more biodiversity-friendly or sustainable as a result of NGT.***

***The death of bees, other pollinators and soil organisms has long since reached threatening proportions. We call on Member States and the EU Parliament to maintain risk assessment and labelling for all NGT plants. Deregulated artificial evolution is not a smart political move, but a cheap excuse to further delay the transition to pesticide-free agriculture. It will not stop the extinction of species in the soil and in pesticide-dependent agriculture."***

**One hundred researchers from a wide range of disciplines have also expressed serious concerns about the EU Commission's proposal on new genetic engineering techniques in an open letter.**

Only recently, a study conducted by the Genetic Engineering and Environment Centre (FGU) as part of the "EU Pollinator Week 2023" pointed out that genetically modified agrofuel plants can damage the brain functions and reproductive capacity of pollinating insects.

The renowned neurobiologist, bee researcher and scientific advisor to the Aurelia Foundation, Prof Dr Dr h.c. Randolph Menzel (FU Berlin), explains that untested NGT applications are irresponsible.

A study by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), which is currently undergoing the peer review process, also points out that (untested) NGT1 applications can have insecticidal effects with potential side effects on non-target organisms (i.e. other insects) and that certain NGT1 plants can pose similar environmental risks (e.g. invasiveness) as other genetically modified organisms.

### Further Information / Links

**Statement by the Society for Ecology (GfÖ):**

[https://gfoe.org/sites/default/files/ngt\\_gfoe\\_final.pdf](https://gfoe.org/sites/default/files/ngt_gfoe_final.pdf)

**Open critical letter from more than one hundred scientists:**

<https://newgmo.org/2023/11/19/open-letter-serious-concerns-about-the-eu-commission-proposal-on-new-genomic-techniques/>

**Background report by the Genetic Engineering and Environment Centre (FGU):**

[https://fachstelle-gentechnik-umwelt.de/wp-content/uploads/Brassicaceae\\_Background.pdf](https://fachstelle-gentechnik-umwelt.de/wp-content/uploads/Brassicaceae_Background.pdf)

**Quote from Prof. Dr Randolph Menzel on the study by the Genetic Engineering and Environment Unit:**

[https://www.aurelia-stiftung.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PM\\_Schadet-Neue-Gentechnik-Bienen\\_Final.pdf](https://www.aurelia-stiftung.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PM_Schadet-Neue-Gentechnik-Bienen_Final.pdf)

**The BfN study:**

<https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202311.1897/v1>

### Contact

**Matthias Wolfschmidt, Director of the Aurelia Foundation:**

[matthias.wolfschmidt@aurelia-stiftung.de](mailto:matthias.wolfschmidt@aurelia-stiftung.de) | +49 30 577003962