



# PRESS RELEASE

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ESA is the voice of the European seed industry, representing those active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural and ornamental plant species. It represents 32 national seed associations (and with that more than 1000 seed businesses in the EU, most of them SMEs) and 42 direct company members.

ESA's mission is to work for fair and proportionate regulation of the European seed industry, freedom of choice for customers in supplying seeds as a result of innovative, diverse technologies and production methods and for effective protection of intellectual property rights relating to plants and seed.

**Contact:**

**ESA**

**European Seed Association**

**Tel. 0032-2-7432860**

[secretariat@euroseeds.org](mailto:secretariat@euroseeds.org)

[www.euroseeds.org](http://www.euroseeds.org)

## EU Parliament and Council are miles apart on Novel foods

The European Parliament adopted the controversial report of Dutch MEP Liotard, including a large number of amendments in second reading in Strasbourg on 7 July.

The final text of the EP still contains a number of points that have been fiercely opposed by Member States and the European Commission, namely on animal cloning but also on the use of nanotechnologies. These points will surely be at the heart of the upcoming conciliation procedure (which is due to start right after the summer break in early September) ) and it is by no means certain that compromise may be reached. Generally, the EP requests even more detailed safety testing and is more prescriptive as regards the authorisation procedure, listing and labelling of Novel Foods.

“This has not been a good outcome for strengthening the innovation capacity of the European agri-food chain”, Garlich von Essen, Secretary General of ESA European Seed Association commented after the vote. “It is difficult to see a logical political agenda when we on the one hand put substantial EU money into research in the area of food, develop a respective strategic research agenda and set up a dedicated European Technology Platform – and on the other we put in place regulations that will make it a very risky business, specifically for small and medium sized enterprises, to invest in new food technologies.”

But the plant breeding industry has a specific point of concern: while the Council had agreed that only products resulting from new breeding techniques (used only after the cut-off date of 1997) that would be substantially different from their existing ‘traditional’ counterparts would fall under the new authorisation requirements. With the EP’s approach, this condition has been deleted and therefore any product resulting from a new technique would automatically fall within the scope of the new Novel Food Regulation.

“We hope that this point can still be addressed in the conciliation process. There is a real risk that we once again drive new technologies, some of them even developed with EU financial support, out of Europe, only to see the resulting products come back as imports and competing with our home grown inputs.”, von Essen describes the scenario: “ESA will continue to try to win support for a pragmatic and workable Novel Food Regulation that safeguards consumer protection and innovation in the agri-food sector at the same time.