



THE ROYAL SWEDISH ACADEMY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

To:

Sabine Juelicher, Director for Food and Feed Safety, Innovation, DG SANTE
Sirkku Heinimaa, Acting Head of Unit for Biotechnology, DG SANTE

CC:

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission
Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President, European Green Deal
Stella Kyriakides, European Commissioner, Health and Food Safety
Janusz Wojciechowski, European Commissioner, Agriculture
Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner, Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

17 March, 2021

The legal status of plants produced with novel genomic techniques

Dear Director,
Dear Head of Unit,

The European Commission is at present preparing a report of the consequences of the ruling of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) on 25 July, 2018, that widely has been interpreted as if all plant produced by genome editing techniques – whose inventors incidentally were rewarded the 2020 Nobel prize in Chemistry, should be GMOs in the sense of Directive 2001/18/EC and none of them exempted from regulation. This report has been requested by the Council of the European Union in a decision on 24 October, 2019. The Council Decision includes a request of a proposal, if appropriate in view of the outcomes of the study.

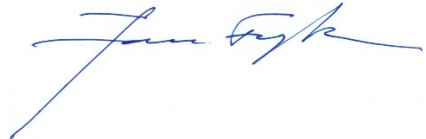
The Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA) has observed and promoted the responsible application of plant biotech research in the development of plant breeding to meet global challenges for many years, but also been open for discussions on social and ethical considerations of these technologies. Thus, KSLA awarded professor Ingo Potrykis the Bertebos Prize in 2007 for his work on the ‘Golden Rice’ and in 2005 the ETP Plants for the Future was launched at the premises of KSLA in Stockholm. KSLA has also organized two dialogue projects over the years 2006–2016, where proponents and opponents of the applications of plant biotech have met to test their respective arguments.

KSLA arranged a seminar on 15 May, 2019 on ‘Will new plant breeding technologies have a future in the EU?’ that reflected upon the ECJ ruling. The discussions at this seminar eventually lead to the onset of the Plant Node project, aiming at support to knowledge based decisions in the field of plant biotech. With reference to the engagement of KSLA in this field for several years and to the enclosed Position Paper of the Union of European Academies for Science Applied to Agriculture, Food and

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Nature (UEAA) on ‘Gene editing and new EU regulations urgently needed’, KSLA now expresses its full support to both the position paper from UEAA, as well as the enclosed letter from the Plant Node on the need to clarify the juridical status of different gene editing technologies and their resulting products. Refraining from this will seriously hamper the possibilities to meet the Sustainable Development Goals within the EU as well as in a global context.

For the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry



Jan Fryk
President



Eva Pettersson
Academy Secretary General and
Managing Director