

D R A F T

**EUROPEAN GMO-free Regions Network
Steering Committee meeting**

12th September 2019, 13:00 h to 15:30

**Representation of Hesse to the EU,
Room 6.26, 21 Rue Montoyer, 1000 Bruxelles**

A g e n d a

➤ **13.00 h Welcome**

Dr. Beatrix Tappeser, President of the Network,
State Secretary at the Hessian Ministry for Environment, Climate
Protection, Agriculture and Consumer Protection

➤ **News and Current Developments**

- ECJ-Ruling and GMO-free Labelling: Objection or not?
- Gene Drives: New Regulation in Germany
- Ornamental Plant Monitoring in Hesse

Dr. Brandt, Hesse

➤ **Future Working Program**

- Possible 10th Conference of the European GMO-free Regions
Network
 - Date: May 2020?
 - Topics
 - Speakers
 - Resolution

Dr. Tappeser, Hesse

➤ **Any other business**

- Possible new members – proposals

Dr. Brandt, Hesse

➤ **15:30 h End of the Meeting**

office

PARTICIPANTS:

Representatives of Member Regions:

GERMANY:

Hesse: State Secretary Dr. Beatrix Tappeser,
Dr. Astrid Brandt, Lisa Fieblinger, Holger Pflüger-Grone

Lower Saxony: apologized

Thuringia: Dr. Manuela Simon

ITALY:

Marche: Antonella Passarani

GREECE:

Eastern Macedonia: absent

AUSTRIA:

Upper Austria: Dr. Gerald Lonauer

Country of Salzburg: Maren Kuschnerus

CROATIA:

Croatian Regions Office: absent

SPAIN:

Basque Country: Luis Elizondo

UNITED KINGDOM:

Wales: apologized

FRANCE:

Nouvelle-Aquitaine: Noëllie Magnes

➤ **Welcome**

State Secretary at the Hessian Ministry for Environment, Climate Protection, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, Beatrix Tappeser, welcomes the participants and starts a short round of introductions. As France has not been involved in the last meetings, it is a great pleasure that the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region is represented by Ms Noëllie Magnes. There are no amendments to the agenda.

➤ **News and Current Developments**

Ms Brandt gives a short update on current topics and activities in Hesse and Germany:

- ECJ-Ruling and GMO-free Labelling: Objection or not?
- Gene Drives: New Regulation in Germany
- Ornamental Plant Monitoring in Hesse

In Germany, it has been discussed if the ECJ-ruling stands in contrast to the national GMO-free label („Ohne Gentechnik“). There is a German pro-GMO initiative „Forum Grüne Vernunft (FGV)“ claiming that using the GMO-free label for products originating from conventional mutagenesis is no longer legally permissible and constitutes an act of illegal consumer deception. Food retail companies were reported to the public prosecution offices due to „strong suspicion of commercial fraud“ as they continue to sell products labelled as GMO-free. According to the prevailing legal opinion, however, there is no chance of success for these accusations. The use of a legally adopted regulation can not be misleading in a legal sense.

Good news is that for the first time in Germany a special regulation for the contained use of gene drive organisms has been adopted. The amended version of the German „Genetic Engineering Safety Regulation“ (Gentechnik-Sicherheitsverordnung) has been announced on August 15th and will enter into force on March 1st, 2021. With the new regulation, gene drive experiments are fundamentally assigned to safety level 3 and are subject to prior approval (not only notification) by the competent authority in any case.

After the discovery of unauthorised GM-petunia in 2017, a guideline for the monitoring of ornamental plants was adopted by the German „Working Group of the Federal Länder on Genetic Engineering“ (LAG). The largest port of entry of petunia cuttings to Germany, the airport in Frankfurt am Main, is located in Hesse. During the last two import seasons, hundreds of petunia cuttings and in 2018/2019 also more than 40 carnations were collected at Frankfurt airport and analysed for genetic modifications. All results were negative. Sampling will be continued and the plant spectrum extended to further species with potential genetic modifications known from literature.

In the following Tour de Table, Ms Simon reports that Thuringia also has received a letter from FGV. No further activities are planned.

Ms Passarani points out that in Italy a group of scientists has adopted a resolution against the application of the precautionary approach and in favour of the clearance of genome editing. The same is reported for Spain by Mr Elizondo. In Spain, the acreage of GM-maize MON810 has decreased for the last two years; in 6 regions no cultivation takes place at all. The occurrence of glyphosate tolerant weeds is not reported so far.

Mr Lonauer explains that in Austria small adjustments of the legislation have to take place in 9 regions until December 14th, 2019, due to entering into force of the Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on official controls. The adoption of a monitoring plan is not intended. Ms Brandt notes that in Germany there is no formal position of the competent ministry BMEL yet if a monitoring plan is required for the monitoring of conventional seeds on the low level presence of GMOs.

Mr Elizondo further suggests to publish news from member regions on the Network website. The idea is highly appreciated and it is agreed that the presidency should make regular queries in the future and ask for current news and developments.

➤ **Future Working Program**

- Possible 10th Conference of the European GMO-free Regions Network in May 2020?

Ms Tappeser reports that the NGO network of GMO-free regions has suggested to have a common event in Brussels next spring. Topics might be the handling of possible contaminations of food, feed and seeds with organisms produced with new genetic engineering techniques including the current import situation.

If an event takes place, Mr Lonauer suggests to involve umbrella organizations like IFOAM. However, most participants were of the opinion that May 2020 was too early for a next conference after September 2018 because there is still continuous development going on without further results since the last meeting. The next meeting might be postponed until the new EU Commission has started its work and delivered first results.

Regardless of possible timelines, Ms Tappeser points out another important issue concerning plans for a further network event. She will retire by November 30th, 2019, and it is not clear if her successor will take over her activities in the network. Also, she has held initial talks in order to identify a possible successor to take over the presidency from Hesse at an appropriate time. There is no timeframe yet when Hesse will hand over the presidency. The members of the Steering Committee express their regret and thank Ms Tappeser already today for her commitment during the last two years.

Finally, she asks for further suggestions of topics to be discussed at a workshop that might be held in Brussels in September or October 2020. **Please send your ideas and also current news to be published on the Network website to gmo-free-hessen@umwelt.hessen.de !**

➤ **Any other business**

- Possible new members – proposals

At the last meeting, the Steering Committee had decided that Serbia might become a regular member of the network regardless of not being a EU-member and not being a region but a nation state. The Serbian Association of the Agricultural Economists that had sent the request was informed that the political will to join the network must be expressed by a political decisional organ representing Serbia. Just recently the network office was informed by a representative of the Serbian Association of the Agricultural Economists that they did not succeed in procuring the political decision about the accession, but will continue their efforts.

- Ms Noëllie Magnes expresses the interest of Nouvelle Aquitaine to further participate in the Steering Committee.
- Mr Elizondo will send another query to all Spanish regions if there is interest in joining the Network.
- Ms Tappeser points out that there might also be further potential members in Germany with the Green Party being in a position to participate in the governments in Saxony and Brandenburg since the last elections.

➤ **15:30 h End of the Meeting**

Minutes: Dr. Astrid Brandt