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Press Release

Decisive Day for EU Agriculture and Seeds

Today's vote on genetic engineering and new seed legislation will determine competition, independence, and diversity

Strasbourg, Vienna, Schiltern – Two crucial decisions regarding the future of European agriculture are taking place this evening in Strasbourg: the final trilogue negotiations on the EU's new seed marketing rules and a vote in the European Parliament's Environment Committee on New Genomic Techniques (NGT). *"While EU agriculture ministers are pushing for the strictest possible regulations for farmers and other producers of diverse seeds in the new seed legislation, they want to give corporations carte blanche for plant patents and the release of genetically engineered plants"* criticises Paul Grabenberger, seed policy expert at ARCHE NOAH, the Austrian Association for the Conservation and Dissemination of Cultivated Plant Diversity.

The EU's seed marketing rules are crucial in determining whether Europe's farmers can access the adaptability of traditional varieties and diverse new varieties to produce good harvests despite the climate crisis. Today's final trilogue meeting will decide both on possible new excessive regulations that could drive small-scale seed producers out of the market, and on the right of farmers to exchange and sell their own seeds and seedlings. "*In light of the climate crisis, we must strengthen local seed production and fully guarantee farmers' rights to seeds,*" says ARCHE NOAH.

In an extraordinary move, 37 amendments to the new genetic engineering regulations have been submitted for a vote in the EU Environment Committee. The agricultural sector's concerns about the impact of patented seeds are so great that even the German Farmers' Association – which is otherwise supportive of new genetic engineering – is advocating for amendments. "*With the new NGT regulation, patented seeds would become the norm in Europe – with serious consequences for competition, our independence, and diversity,*" warns Paul Grabenberger of ARCHE NOAH. All rules protecting against genetic contamination would be eliminated in the new regulation, and NGT plants could end up on our plates without labelling or risk assessment.

"Not voting means voting in favour"

The ball is now in the EU Parliament's court. "*We urge all MEPs to participate in the votes on new genetic engineering – for freedom of choice and against patents on seeds,*" demands ARCHE NOAH. With regard to the new EU seed marketing rules, the European Parliament's chief negotiator, Herbert Dorfmann (European People's Party, EPP), must insist on protecting farmers' rights and on limiting bureaucratic burdens for small-scale seed producers. "*The influence of the agrochemical lobby is enormous. Our politicians must withstand this pressure and clearly stand up for farmers' rights, independence, and diversity,*" says Paul Grabenberger of ARCHE NOAH.

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