



Dear Member of the European Parliament,

we are reaching out to you ahead of the **vote on the report on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, in plenary today, to ask you to support paragraph 148**. This paragraph proposes concrete measures to apply the precautionary principle regarding the environmental release and testing of genetically engineered gene drive organisms.

Gene Drives – a new eradication technology

In the midst of a development, termed the Planet's 6th mass extinction, emerges a **new genetic engineering technology called Gene Drive**. This technology is enabled by genetic engineering tools like CRISPR/Cas9 and **makes it possible to genetically modify, replace and even eradicate wild species**.

A Gene Drive changes the natural rules of inheritance in an organism. It forces the inheritance of new traits to up to 100% of its offspring, even when they are harmful to the organism. Unlike other applications of 'genome editing' aimed at creating new traits for farmed plants and animals, **Gene Drives are designed to set in motion an unstoppable genetic chain reaction in nature with the aim of genetically engineering entire populations, wild species and ecosystems**. First applications are designed to spread infertility in mice, rats, fruit flies and mosquitos in order to decimate invasive species, agricultural pests and disease carrying insects. Apart from that, Gene Drives could also be used to spread genes that provide competitive advantages for certain organisms or resistance e.g. to pesticides. Gene Drives also have the potential to be used for hostile purposes.

The consequences of their use in nature cannot be predicted. But it is already clear that it has the **potential to cause severe negative and irreversible impacts for food webs, ecosystems, biodiversity and food production**. Once released into the environment, the (transboundary)

spread and outcrossing of gene drive organisms with natural relatives is impossible to control, stop or reverse. Afterwards it would be impossible to restore the genome of wild populations to its previous state.

While we, the undersigned organisations, are of the opinion that gene drive technology should not be tested or applied in nature at all, due to its potential to cause irreversible, severe adverse effects to biodiversity and its sustainable use,

we think that the paragraph 148 adopted by the Environmental Committee provides reasonable suggestions on how to implement the European Parliament's previous position in its resolution on the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity ([2019/2824\(RSP\)](#)), where it called "on the Commission and the Member States to call for **a global moratorium at the COP15 on releases of gene drive organisms into nature, including field trials**, in order to prevent these new technologies from being released prematurely and to **uphold the precautionary principle**, which is enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union as well as the CBD".

Therefore, we would like to ask you to vote in favour of paragraph 148,

which reads:

"Is concerned about the new legal, environmental, biosafety and governance challenges that might arise from the release of genetically engineered gene drive organisms into the environment, including for nature conservation purposes; acknowledges the outcome of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group of the Convention on Biological Diversity on gene drives and living modified fish [1], which raises concerns about the difficulties of predicting their behaviour, assessing their risks and controlling them after release; notes that gene drive organisms could become invasive species in themselves; considers that global and EU-level risk assessment guidance materials, tools and an environmental monitoring framework, as well as clear global governance and effective mechanisms for controlling and reversing the effects of gene drive organisms, should be fully developed, and that additional research is required on the health, environmental, ecological, ethical and other implications of gene drive organisms to better understand their potential impact; considers therefore that no releases of genetically engineered gene drive organisms should be allowed, including for nature conservation purposes, in line with the precautionary principle [2]; "

For further explanation please refer to this [short briefing paper](#).

For more comprehensive information please refer to this [independent scientific compendium](#).

Regarding the criteria necessary for an assessment of risks and benefits of gene drive technology for biodiversity – as currently discussed by the IUCN - we recommend to read this [short briefing paper by independent scientists](#).

On behalf of the undersigned organizations*

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*The undersigned organisations are:

Stop Gene Drive Campaign	EU
Greenpeace	EU
WeMoveEurope	EU
Third World Network	International
ETC Group	International
Corporate Europe Observatory	EU
EcoNexus	International
GMWatch	UK
Ecoropa	EU
ZaZemiata	Bulgaria
Testbiotech	Germany/EU
Citizens initiative Slovakia without GMO	Slovakia
NOAH Friends of the Earth Denmark	Denmark
Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft	Germany
Beyond GM	UK
Pollinis	France
Aurelia Stiftung	Germany
Peliti	Greece
Sito seeds Greece	Greece
Foundation AgriNatura for Agricultural Biodiversity	Poland
Vitale Rassen	Belgium
Plataforma Transgénicos Fora	Portugal
Instytut Spraw Obywatelskich	Poland
Save Our Seeds	Germany
Umweltinstitut München	Germany
Kein Patent auf Leben	Germany
Zielone Wiadomości	Poland
Social Ecological Institute	Poland
