

Press release by Save Our Seeds / Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft, Berlin – Germany

Gene Drive technology: Species extinction through genetic engineering?
78 organizations call on the European Commission to enact a temporary ban on the novel Gene Drive technology.

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In an [open letter](#) initiated by Greenpeace EU, Friends of the Earth Europe, IFOAM EU and the German initiative Save Our Seeds, 78 environmental, agricultural, animal welfare and development aid organizations from all over Europe are calling on the EU Commission to outlaw the release of so-called Gene Drive Organisms in the EU and internationally. With this new application of genetic engineering, entire animal populations and species in nature could be reprogrammed or eradicated.

Enabled by the genetic engineering method CRISPR/CAS9, mosquitoes, mice, fruit flies and other organisms can be manipulated in the laboratory to pass on a certain trait and the mechanism for genetic manipulation to all offspring and across generations. In this way, Gene Drive Organisms can replace their relatives in nature. The Gene Drive trait also asserts itself when it is deadly to the survival of the species – thereby overriding the normal rules of evolutionary selection.

The signatory organisations are calling on the EU to advocate a global moratorium on the release of Gene Drive Organisms at the next Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The European Parliament had already called for such a moratorium in a [resolution](#) from January this year, responding to a [call from over 200 signatories](#) from Europe and worldwide.

"The loss of biodiversity is one of the greatest challenges of our time. While the risks of Gene Drive technology have not yet been scientifically assessed, it could have a massive impact on already damaged ecosystems. It is irresponsible to expose species and ecosystems to further risks" explains the initiator of the European "Stop Gene Drives" campaign, Mareike Imken from the German initiative Save Our Seeds.

She adds: „The EU Commission recently presented its biodiversity strategy, with which it wants to make the EU a global pioneer for the protection of biodiversity and put an end to the ongoing mass extinction of species. The Gene Drive technology however is designed to drive wild populations and species into self destruction. The use of such a technology contradicts the aim of biodiversity conservation and the precautionary principle, which is the basis for international and EU nature conservation law. A global moratorium would give us the time to assess environmental and health risks, publicly evaluate and discuss this technology and to establish missing regulations and global decision-making mechanisms. In the meanwhile, noone in the world should use this technology."

The open letter signed by 78 organizations can be found [here](#).

Further reading:

[Policy briefing: „Why a global moratorium on the release of Gene Drive Organisms is necessary“ by Save Our Seeds](#)

[Executive Summary of „Gene Drives: A report on the science, applications, social aspects, ethics and regulations.“ By the European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility \(ENSSER\), Critical Scientist Switzerland and the Federation of German Scientists \(VDW\), published in 2019.](#)

[Short documentary on the science, applications, ecological and social ramifications and necessary regulation of Gene Drive technology with statements from international experts, based on the findings of the report \(above\).](#)

Further information on gene drives: www.stop-genedrives.eu/en

Contact:

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