

A large graphic of overlapping, semi-transparent leaf shapes in various shades of green and blue, arranged in a fan-like pattern from the bottom left towards the top right. The leaves are stylized with smooth, curved edges.

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Finland's Presidency
of the Council
of the European Union

High-level conference on plant breeding innovation “Growing the future together”

Mr Jari Leppä, President of the AGRIFISH COUNCIL of the
EU

De Warande, Brussels, 19th November, 2019



When discussing plant breeding, we have something to offer in terms of climate change adaptation.



New plant breeding techniques provide plants that adapt more quickly:

- to **a changing climate**, or
- to altered conditions.

In the Commission's Farm to Fork Strategy, I hope that the first links in the food chain will also be taken into account, one of which is plant breeding.



With climate change and more extreme weather events, we need **more resilient** plants to ensure food security across Europe.

Northern countries also need to breed new species. For example, in my own country, gene editing could be used to **prevent pre-harvest sprouting** and to **improve disease and pest resistance**.

The decision of the European Court of Justice brought legal clarity to the situation: plant breeding techniques are now subject to GMO legislation.

However, it also raised **important and complex practical questions** that have an impact on Europe's plant breeding industry, research and trade.

We are now in the same situation as if we were authorising GMO varieties for cultivation, food or feed use.

Lengthy and expensive GMO approvals mean that **SMEs are unable to make use** of these modern, targeted, fast, easy and affordable methods.

It is possible that **plant breeding companies will leave the EU** because of our strict regulations.

Moreover, European farmers will not be able to benefit from the new varieties.

On 8th of November, the Council made a decision requesting the Commission to submit a study on the options to update the existing legislation.

The study shall be submitted to the Council by the end of April 2021.

We all hope that the study will shed light on the situation.

If necessary, the Commission must be prepared to submit a proposal to amend the GMO directive.



I wish you a very fruitful discussion on this very important subject today.



Thank you for your attention!



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