

Online Workshop “No Patents on Seeds!” (10 June 2026)

Future Regulation of NGT Plants and Seed Patents: Time to Take the Right Decisions

Perspectives and recommendations from farmers

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Presentation:

My name is Annemarie Volling. I represent the Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL) – the Working group for peasant agriculture. I’m the AbL Officer for GMO-free agriculture.

We represent small and medium-sized farmers who operate conventionally or organically. At European level, we work in partnership with La Via Campesina.

Many thanks to *No Patents on Seeds!* for organising this workshop and for your important work on patents. Thank you for joining us today.

From a farmers’ perspective, we oppose patents on plants and animals. For ethical reasons: Because life – that means plants, animals and humans – is not patentable. But also for socio-economically reasons, as patents lead to the monopolisation of the seed market. But seeds are the basis of our food production. Seeds are the cultural heritage and seeds are a common good. Seeds must be freely available to everyone and must not be monopolised by a handful of multinational companies.

An old farming saying goes: The ones who hold the seed – hold the power.

Therefore, we farmers, but also the responsible politicians in the Member States and the Members of the European Parliament, must not allow a tiny handful of multinational corporations to determine in future how and what will be bred, what we sow and harvest, what we feed our animals and what we eat.

There is currently much talk in the EU about the need for us to become independent. This is correct and must apply once again to seeds, the basis of our food production and food sovereignty.

In addition to the increasing patenting of seeds, as a farmers’ organisation we are also deeply concerned about the planned draft legislation on new GM plants. I would like to address both issues today.

The planned deregulation of NGT-plants:

Earlier this week, 2,000 businesses and enterprises sent a letter to German MEPs.¹ We urged them to vote against the proposed regulation on new genetically modified (NGT) crops.

Why? Companies in the sectors of plant breeding, agriculture, horticulture, food processing and retail see the economic future of their businesses as being under serious threat. If the proposed

¹ <https://www.abl-ev.de/aktuelles/details/ueber-2000-wirtschaftsunternehmen-fordern-eu-parlament-muss-neues-gentechnik-gesetz-ablehnen-1>

legislation was adopted as it stands, GMO-free food production would no longer be possible. Neither conventional nor organic. Or only at a great expense and with very high costs, even though these companies produce what the majority of people in Europe want: no GMOs on their plates.

For the vast majority of NGT plants, existing rules are to be completely abolished (that means NGT-Plants in category 1). The EU precautionary principle is to be scrapped. This means: no risk assessment, no mandatory detection methods, no monitoring.

All protective measures against NGT-1 contamination are to be eliminated. NGT contamination would be unavoidable. It would no longer be possible to produce GMO-free seeds or food. And: The existing liability rules would also no longer apply.

Our unique selling point and our competitive advantage in the market – the fact that we can produce GMO-free food – would be destroyed, if the European standards were abolished. This would have significant economic consequences for the entire food sector, both conventional and organic!

The draft legislation serves only the interests of multinational GMO-corporations. The risks and costs, as well as the economic and environmental damage, would have to be borne by GMO-free breeders, farmers, gardeners, food processors and society as a whole. In our view, this is unacceptable.

Consumer protection is being disregarded. There are plans to remove the labelling requirement right through to the end product. However, citizens want to know what they are eating and make their own informed choices.

Thats why 2,000 companies (Breeders, Farmers, Food processors, Retailers) called the responsible MEPs:

- **Say NO to the deregulation of NGT plants**

Patents:

As already explained, patents have massive economic implications for future breeding, as they effectively prevent free access to seeds for further breeding. Patents on plants, products and genetic traits will lead to even greater concentration in the seed market. This has serious consequences for us farmers too.

It would lead to a massive reduction in seed diversity. A handful of corporations would determine which traits they breed for, which varieties they bring to market, and at what prices. Corporations want to enter large markets with just a few select varieties. This would mean standardised, uniform seed.

In practice, however, we farmers need many breeders who develop diverse varieties. We need varieties that are adaptable to local conditions. We need agrobiodiversity and many breeders. Without this, urgently needed adaptability are at risk – including to the growing climate crisis and our food sovereignty.

Medium-sized breeding companies tell me that they are no longer breeding for certain traits because there are too many patents and, consequently, too much legal uncertainty for breeders. From a farmer's perspective, this is extremely dangerous.

We are not alone in our view. The Federal Association of German Plant Breeders (BDP) and the German Farmers' Association (DBV) have also spoken out clearly against patents on plants and plant products.

The German Farmers' Association also warns of the risks of patents. They see the potential introduction of patents through NGT-techniques as crossing a clear red line: "Patents must not block breeding progress. If key plant characteristics are monopolised by individual companies, our farmers and small and medium-sized breeders will lose access to important genetic material," warns Ms Sabet, the General Secretary of the DBV.

Because of these reasons we ask the European parliament:

- **Say No to the deregulation of NGT plants**
- **Serve legally binding patent bans.**
- **Now!**

Thanks!

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