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**Republic of Austria**  
Social Affairs, Health, Care  
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 **Federal Ministry**  
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Climate Action, Environment  
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## **European Commission proposal regarding new genomic techniques**

Vienna, 23. MRZ. 2023

Dear Commissioner Kyriakides, *Dear Stella,*

Austria welcomes the process initiated by the European Commission for the drafting of new rules for plants produced by certain new genomic techniques. This field has seen a tremendous amount of scientific and technological development over the past years, which certainly provides new opportunities for breeding plants.

These opportunities, however, pose risks for human and environmental safety that require strict regulatory oversight and the application of the precautionary principle, given the fact that experience with these new genomic techniques is still limited.

We are therefore deeply concerned that the forthcoming proposal by the European Commission could aim at loosening the strict rules on genetically modified organisms. We are convinced that a responsible use of plants produced with new genomic techniques should require pre-market risk assessment, admission, and labelling.

Austria is highly committed to supporting organic and non-GM food production and the Green Deal target of at least 25 % organic farmland by 2030. We would therefore be rather cautious towards any legislative changes that could disrupt these food markets and

threaten the coexistence of GM, non-GM and organic farming, or could have negative consequences for the freedom of choice of consumers.

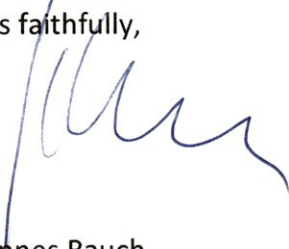
In addition, legal aspects concerning the open access to seeds and coexistence still need to be clarified. We therefore ask the European Commission to conduct a study concerning this matter and to present it to the Council for discussion.

At this point, we want to stress that we do not want to hinder technological progress – we want to shape it, and therefore ensure that strict rules continue to apply, based on scientific findings.

We are convinced that a more reliable scientific and legal basis is needed and further debate amongst Member States, experts, and stakeholders should take place before the publication of the proposal.

We are ready to have further discussions on the impact assessment and the necessary measures to secure human and environmental safety at any time.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Johannes Rauch  
Federal Minister for Social Affairs,  
Health, Care and Consumer Protection

A handwritten signature in blue ink, featuring a large, stylized 'L' and 'G' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Leonore Gewessler  
Federal Minister for Climate Action,  
Environment, Energy, Mobility,  
Innovation and Technology