Testbiotech Background 05 – 09 - 2024

NGT plant developers take over the EFSA GMO Panel

Conflicts of interest taint the independence of the European Food Safety Authority

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Summary

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recently announced a number of new appointments to its "Panel on Genetically Modified Organisms" (GMO Panel) as well as several other panels. The experts on the GMO Panel prepare scientific opinions on the risk assessment of genetically engineered (GE) plants prior to market approval being issued. They are also responsible for the development of risk assessment guidelines. In the past, Testbiotech has revealed various conflicts of interest in relation to this panel, and it has, therefore, taken a closer look at the newly appointed experts based on their declarations of interests (dois) published on the EFSA website. According to the analysis of this data and internet investigations:

- 7 out of 16 panel members are actively involved in the development of genetically engineered (GE) plants, including plants obtained from new genetic engineering (NGTs);
- the chair of the panel advises industry on issues related to EFSA core activities, apparently without EFSA identifying this as a conflict of interest;
- five experts are or were involved in projects with industry, including Limagrain, Syngenta or Corteva (formerly DowDuPont/Pioneer);
- five experts are listed as inventors in patent applications and many of these applications were filed by industry;
- six experts are or were involved in lobbying activities in regard to GE plants, most of these activities were to do with the deregulation of NGT plants;
- there are various cases of lobbying activities not mentioned in the respective dois.

All in all, this appears to be an extremely large network of vested interests, lobby activities and involvement in ongoing political discussion about future regulation in the GMO Panel.

1. Introduction

In July 2024, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) announced that "*180 leading experts joined the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) scientific panels for a new 5-year term. EFSA's experts provide independent scientific advice to protect EU consumers, animals and the environment.*"[1] According to EFSA, the "*appointed scientists, from 26 countries [...] were selected following a rigorous evaluation procedure and screening of their declarations of interest, adhering to EFSA's strict rules on transparency and independence.*"

11 of the 16 members serving on the "Panel on Genetically Modified Organisms" (GMO Panel) are new appointments.[2] GMO Panel experts are responsible for preparing scientific opinions on the risk assessment of genetically engineered (GE) plants prior to market approval. They are also responsible for developing risk assessment guidelines.

1https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/news/efsa-recruits-leading-scientists-panels-5-year-term
2https://open.efsa.europa.eu/scientific-panel/9

Since its foundation, EFSA has been involved in several cases of conflicts of interest, frequently involving the GMO Panel. Testbiotech previously revealed links between the GMO Panel and industry thinktanks, e.g. the *International Life Sciences Institute* (ILSI).[3] The lobby watchdog Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) collected and published a list of findings from various sources on this topic.[4] Public pressure and interventions from the European Parliament and the European Ombudsman, who declared in 2015 that the authority should revise its rules on conflict of interest, led to several updates of the EFSA independence policy. The latest update (from 2024) is due to come into force at the end of 2024.[5]

This backgrounder analyses the current GMO Panel members in terms of possible conflicts of interest and overall composition. All 'declarations of interest' (dois) of the 16 experts of the GMO Panel were screened. The investigated parameters comprised their area of expertise as well as links to industry (such as project funding), intellectual property rights (patents) and links to lobby groups. A number of additional investigations were initiated.

2. The current GMO Panel members and their areas of expertise

The 'declarations of interest' (dois) submitted by the panel members show that many of them are actively involved in the development of transgenic plants (GE plants), or plants obtained from new genetic engineering (NGT). In fact, according to the declarations, 7 out of 16 experts do not have a background in risk assessment, but in the development of genetically engineered plants (see Table 1). Basic research and experience in the development of genetically engineered plants is certainly relevant to the work of the GMO Panel. However, the high number of experts actively involved in the development of GE/NGT plants is unprecedented compared to previous panels. Table 1 also reveals a lack of ecological expertise in the current panel.

Table 1: Current EFSA GMO Panel members and their areas of expertise

GMO Panel member	Area of expertise
Josep Casacuberta (Chair)	Molecular biology (plant biotechnology) → development of GE/NGT plants
Michelle Epstein (Vice chair)	Immunology
Christoph Tebbe (Vice Chair)	Soil microbiology
Francisco Barro Losada	Molecular biology (plant biotechnology) → development of GE/NGT plants
Albert Braeuning	Toxicology
Pilar Cubas	Molecular biology (plant biotechnology) → development of GE/NGT plants
Ruud de Maagd	Molecular biology (plant biotechnology) → development of GE/NGT plants
Thomas Frenzel	Food chemistry
Jean-Luc Gallois	Molecular biology (plant biotechnology) → development of GE/NGT plants
Frits Koning	Immunology
Antoine Messéan	Ecology
F. Javier Moreno	Microbiology

3 https://www.testbiotech.org/en/news/efsa-playing-field-biotech-industry/
https://www.testbiotech.org/en/news/efsas-revolving-door-biotech-industry-unacceptable/
https://www.testbiotech.org/en/news/did-eu-commission-interfere-scientific-independence-efsa/
4 https://corporateeurope.org/en/food-and-agriculture/efsa/chronology
5 https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/news/efsa-updates-independence-policy

GMO Panel member	Area of expertise
Fabien Nogué	Molecular biology (plant biotechnology) → development of GE/NGT plants
Giovanni Savoini	Animal nutrition / Food safety
Alan Schulman	Molecular biology (plant biotechnology) → development of GE/NGT plants
Eve Veromann	Ecology / RNAi pesticides

2. Industry links, patents, lobby groups - overview

Testbiotech analysed the dois of the 7 experts listed in Table 2. This analysis includes aspects such as patents, industry funding and lobbying activities. The findings as summarized in Table 2 show that:

- five (out of 16) experts are or were involved in projects with industry, including Limagrain, Syngenta or Corteva (formerly DowDuPont/Pioneer);
- two experts are or were working as industry consultants, one of them being the GMO Panel chair;
- five experts are listed as inventors in patent applications and many of these applications were filed by industry;
- six experts are or were involved in lobbying activities for GE plants, most of them in activities regarding the deregulation of NGT plants;
- there are apparent cases of non-compliance to independence rules, this mainly relates to lobbying activities that are not mentioned in the respective dois.

The results are explained in more detail in the following chapters.

Table 2: EFSA GMO Panel members, industry links, patents and lobby activities

GMO Panel member	**Industry funded projects**	**Industry consultancy**	**Patents on transgenic/NGT plants**	**Development of transgenic/NGT plants**	**EPSO**	**ARRIGE**	**EU-SAGE**	**Other lobby activities**
Josep Casacuberta (Chair)		X		X	X	X	X*	
Francisco Barro Losada	X		X	X			X*	
Pilar Cubas	X		X	X	X			WePlanet*
Ruud de Maagd	X			X				PRRI*
Jean-Luc Gallois	X		X	X				
Fabien Nogué	X	X**	X	X		X		
Alan Schulman			X	X	X			WePlanet*

* not declared in doi
** declared in doi of former EFSA term

3. Lobby groups mentioned (or not mentioned) in the dois submitted by the experts

There are many groups and organisations actively lobbying in favour of genetically engineered plants. Apart from industry organisations, such as *EuropaBio*, the umbrella organisation of the biotech industry, there are several other lobby groups involving scientists active in the field. The activities of these lobby groups drew criticism from Corporate Europe Oberservatory (CEO) and others, mainly for undisclosed vested interests. Many of these lobby organisations have been engaged in actively promoting the deregulation of NGT plants. Whereas several members of the new GMO Panel declared their membership, e.g. in the European Plant Science Organisation (EPSO) and/or the lobby organisation ARRIGE, others failed to declare their support for these organisations or other groups, such as WePlanet or PRRI.

a) EPSO

In its own words, EPSO, the European Plant Science Organisation, is an academic organisation *„representing 70 institutional members bringing together more than 200 research institutes, departments and universities from 31 countries in Europe and beyond.“*[6]

The EPSO working group responsible for GMO plants and NGTs is called ‘Agricultural Technologies’. It is currently chaired by Frank Hartung, (Julius-Kühn Institut, JKI, Germany), Ralf Wilhelm (JKI), Alan Schulman (see below) and others.[7]

EPSO has spoken out against the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling on NGTs. In 2018, the court declared that NGT plants must be treated the same way as GMOs, considering that the risks may be similar. In a first response, EPSO expressed *“their disappointment on the ruling which classifies plants obtained by recent techniques such as CRISPR-Cas9-mediated genome editing as GMO that are subject to extensive pre-market risk evaluations. It is contrary to scientific evidence and as it stands now, it very likely will prevent the use in Europe of such technologies to address food and nutritional security and a more positive impact of agriculture on the environment.“*[8]

In the aftermath of the ruling, EPSO lobbied extensively for the deregulation of NGTs in the EU, for example, in informal meetings with policy makers. Part of the lobby strategy was to search for flagship projects which could be used to convince the public (*“...a brain storming was initiated to identify convincing examples of genome edited plants with strong benefits to farmers and/or consumers”*),[9] as well as engagement with the European Commission to suggest ways going forward to improve European legislation in regard to the use of NGTs.

b) ARRIGE

The *Association for Responsible Research and Innovation in Genome Editing* (ARRIGE) is a lobby organisation pushing for the deregulation of NGT plants.[10] It was founded in Paris in December 2018. Its goals are to “*promote a global governance of genome editing*”, to “*push forward the scientific, ethical, social, legal and political reflection in the field*”, to “*foster the development of genome editing technologies within a safe and ethical framework for individuals and for our societies*”; and the “*dissemination of reliable information regarding genome-editing technology*”.[11]

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6 https://epsoweb.org/about-epso/
7 https://epsoweb.org/working-groups/agricultural-technologies/page/2/
8 https://epsoweb.org/epso/court-of-justice-of-the-eu-ruling-regarding-mutagenesis-and-the-gmo-directive/2018/07/26/
9 https://epsoweb.org/epso/genome-editing-improving-legislation-and-starting-flagships-to-better-address-climate-environmental-food-and-health-challenges-2/2021/02/16/
10 https://www.arrige.org
11 https://www.arrige.org/about-us/

In a 2021 statement, ARRIGE claimed that the genomic changes in genome editing processes *"are of the same nature than the ones resulting from spontaneous mutations or random mutagenesis and therefore, in general, no additional risks are foreseen linked to the process of gene-editing."*[12]

In a 2023 statement, ARRIGE hailed the EU Commission proposal for the (de)regulation of NGT plants "*that approaches the EU to the rest of the world and that will potentiate research and innovation in the field of plant genome editing within the EU, helping the European agrifood industry and the farmers.*"[13]

The group is also calling for the use of NGTs in organic agriculture.

c) EU-SAGE

The aim of the European Sustainable Agriculture through Genome Editing network (EU-SAGE) is to amend European legislation so that NGT plants are not subject to the provisions of the current GMO Directive, but instead fall under the regulations that apply to traditionally bred varieties.[14]
The network is led by scientists from the VIB (Vlaams Instituut voor Biotechnologie), a Belgian research institute which works closely with industry. The driving force behind EU-SAGE is Dirk Inzé, the co-founder of the former biotech seed company, CropDesign (acquired by BASF Plant Science), and an inventor named in many patent applications filed for genetically engineered plants.
The EU-SAGE network has members and supporters in many EU countries. The title of its position paper ("*Regulating genome-edited organisms as GMOs has negative consequences for agriculture, society and economy*") nicely sums up the aims of the group.[15]
It demands that "*legislation should be altered such that crops with small DNA adaptations obtained through genome editing are not subject to the provisions of the GMO Directive but instead fall under the regulatory regime that applies to classically bred varieties*" for the sake of "*Europe's competitiveness*".

d) PRRI

The Public Research and Regulation Initiative (PRRI) claims to be a network of scientists from the "*public research sector*" and is mainly active in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) biosafety negotiations. The group acknowledges financial contributions by Monsanto, CropLife International (the international trade association of the agrochemical industry) and ISAAA (International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications), which promotes the commercialisation of genetically engineered plants in developing countries.[16] Leading PRRI members comprised former Monsanto and Syngenta employees. A CEO report therefore concluded that PRRI is a "*corporate driven pro-biotech lobby group on biosafety issues.*"

e) WePlanet

WePlanet is an ecomodernist activist organisation. Ecomodernists believe that technology will solve all environmental problems. They are fervent supporters of techno-fixes such as genetic engineering and nuclear energy. The Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) has described their world view as 'naive faith in technology'.[17] According to the EU transparency register[18], their funding (more than 900.000 € annually) mainly comes from a dubious climate foundation connected to a London investment firm, that, according to the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, is 'run by billionaires whose fund has stakes worth $170m in fossil fuel firms.'[19]

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12 https://arrige.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Statement_regulation_geneediting_plants_ARRIGE.pdf
13 https://www.arrige.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ARRIGE_SC_statement_NGTs.pdf
14 https://www.eu-sage.eu/sites/default/files/2021-04/Position%20paper%20on%20the%20ECJ%20ruling.pdf
15 https://www.eu-sage.eu/sites/default/files/2021-04/Position%20paper%20on%20the%20ECJ%20ruling.pdf
16 https://prri.net/about-prri-donate
17 https://www.sts.kit.edu/kit_express_1349.php
18 https://transparency-register.europa.eu/searchregister-or-update/organisation-detail_de?id=179551845769-58
19 https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jun/30/climate-groups-accept-millions-from-charity-linked-to-fossil-fuel-investments-quadrature-climate-foundation

4. EFSA GMO Panel members – case studies

a) Josep Casacuberta

Josep Casacuberta is a long-standing member of several EFSA GMO Panel working groups and currently serves as chair of the Panel. He works at the Spanish Center for Research in Agricultural Genomics (CRAG). According to his EFSA doi, he is also:

- actively involved in the development of NGT plants (several publications on this subject);
- a member of the Agricultural Technologies Working Group of EPSO;
- a member of the Scientific Committee of the ARRIGE organisation, which lobbies for NGTs;
- an advisor to Sequentia Biotech on issues related to EFSA risk-assessment aspects in the project "Development of Roadmaps for Action on Applying Omics and Bioinformatics Approaches: Towards Next Generation Risk Assessment".

He is also part of the EU-SAGE lobby network, which is not declared in the EFSA doi,[20] and a signatory to EU-SAGE's pro-deregulation position paper regarding NGT plants.

b) Francisco Barro Losada

Francisco Barro Losada is a researcher at the Spanish Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), the Spanish National Research Council. According to his EFSA doi, he is also:

- actively involved in the development of NGT plants (several publications on this subject);
- listed as an inventor in several patent applications filed for transgenic, RNAi and NGT plants (EP2395089B1, EP17382335, EP3011036, EP2395089, WO2016202805);
- a participant in several industry-funded projects for the development of CRISPR/Cas plants (Agrocelys; Plant Bioscience Ltd.).

He is also member of the EU-SAGE lobby network[21], which is not declared in his doi.

c) Pilar Cubas

Pilar Cubas also works at the Spanish Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC). According to her EFSA doi, her responsibilities include the "development and application of transgenic and NGT tools". According to her EFSA doi, she is also:

- co-author of a statement published by the Spanish Academy of Sciences regarding the EC proposal on NGTs;
- a member of EPSO;
- a project partner of Semillas Arnedo, a company working on the development of genome edited lettuce;
- listed as inventor in two expired patents (Patent holder: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas).

As far as her EPSO membership is concerned, it should be noted that she is a board member (not declared in her doi). According to EPSO website, she promises that, as a board member, she will *"... engage actively with policymakers, working to promote a more supportive legal framework for New Genetic Technologies (NGTs) within the EU"*.[22] As an EFSA expert, she is now in a position to deliver these promises.

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20 https://www.eu-sage.eu/ournetwork
21 https://www.eu-sage.eu/ournetwork
22 https://epsoweb.org/about-epso/epso-team-board/

As the co-author of a statement issued by the Spanish Academy of Sciences regarding the EC proposal on the future regulation of NGT plants, she claimed if NGTs were to be treated as GMOs, this would cause immediate damage to the European economy . *"At present, authorisation for the cultivation or marketing of these varieties is subject to the same laborious process as the authorisation of a transgenic variety. This difficulty obstructs the development of the agri-food sector and will have a negative impact on the competitiveness of the European business system."*[23]

She is also a signatory to a letter from the lobby group, WePlanet, demanding the deregulation of NGT plants.[24] This activity is not mentioned in her doi.

d) Ruud de Maagd

Ruud de Maagd is a scientist at Wageningen Plant Research. According to his EFSA doi:

- he is actively involved in the development of NGT plants;
- current industry partners involved in his projects are Nunhems Nederland, East West Seeds, Bejo Zaden and others.

He does not mention his membership in the GMO lobby group PRRI (Public Research and Regulation Initiative) in his doi.[25]

e) Jean-Luc Gallois

Jean-Luc Gallois works as a Research Director at the French Institut national de recherche pour l'agriculture, l'alimentation et l'environnement (INRAE). According to his EFSA doi, his focus is on *"research based on genome editing, especially on CRISPR-Cas9 and derivative such as base editing system."*

The doi also shows that:

- he is actively involved in the development of NGT plants;
- many of his projects are co-founded by industry (Limagrain, Syngenta);
- he was awarded the Prix Limagrain;
- he is listed as inventor in a patent application filed by Limagrain (WO2024023207A1).

f) Fabien Nogué

Fabien Nogué works as a scientist at INRAE, the French Institut national de recherche pour l'agriculture, l'alimentation et l'environnement. According to his EFSA doi, he has *"a particular interest in New Breeding Technology, especially Site Directed Nucleases (ZFN, TALEN, CRISPR) for plant genome editing."* Other information contained in his doi shows that:

- he was a member of the lobby group ARRIGE;
- he participated in many projects regarding the development of NGT plants;
- many of his research projects on NGT plants are/were (partly) industry funded (Limagrain, Medicago, Corteva);
- he is listed as an inventor in several industry plant patent applications filed by companies (mostly held by Limagrain) (USA 61/418,792, EP4107273 A, EP4077652 A1)

Earlier EFSA dois show that until 2018 he also worked as an industry consultant for the French breeding company, Société Nouvelle des Pépinières et Roseraies Georges DELBARD SAS.[26]

g) Alan Schulman

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23 https://cosce.org/docs/informe_COSCE_revisi%C3%B3n_marco_regulador_de_tecnicas_de_edicion_genomica_2022.pdf [translation]

24 https://www.weplanet.org/ngtopenletter

25 https://prri.net/prri-members

26 https://corporateeurope.org/en/2019/06/efsa-gene-drive-working-group-fails-independence-test

Alan Schulman is a professor of Plant Biotechnology at the Natural Resources Institute Finland. According to his doi, he is:

- actively involved in the development of NGT plants;
- a member of the EPSO working group "Agricultural Technologies" (and former president of the organisation);
- named as inventor in a patent on transgenic plants (according to the doi, he transferred all rights and interests to the patent assignee).

In recent years, Alan Schulman was very active in the debate on the future regulation of NGT plants and authored or co-authored several EPSO statements on this subject,[27] always speaking out in favor of deregulation.
In 2018, an EPSO announcement quotes him as saying: *"The ECJ ruling is based on a complete misunderstanding of the scientific evidence, principles of biology and genetics, and the correct application of the precautionary principle; it short changes European farmers, consumers, and the environment by advocating a return to old and inaccurate approaches to plant breeding."*[28]

In 2023, an EPSO response co-authored by Schulman warmly welcomed the EU legal proposal for (de)regulation of NGT plants and *"looks forward to the advent of diverse, sustainable crops for healthful, diverse diets within Europe, developed in a timely way with methods that best suit the goals."*[29]
Other recent EPSO statements co-authored by Schulman call, e.g. for a massive expansion of possible genetic changes to a NGT plant without letting the plant fall under GMO legislation, or allowing NGTs to be introduced into organic agriculture.[30] A further statement demanded a ban on labeling NGT organisms.[31]

Like Pilar Cubas, he is a signatory of an open letter initiated by the ecomodernist lobby group *WePlanet* demanding the deregulation of NGT plants.[32] This activity is not declared in his doi.

Alan Schulman is also author of opinion pieces in scientific papers calling for the deregulation of NGT plants.[33]

5. Relevance of these findings and conclusion

The EFSA GMO Panel is responsible for the risk assessment of genetically engineered plants and for risk assessment guidelines and, therefore, plays a vital role in respect to the authorisation, food safety and environmental effects of these plants. This analysis of the newly appointed panel shows that there has been a major shift in its composition.

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27 https://epsoweb.org/epso/epso-statement-detecting-a-point-mutation-does-not-clarify-its-origin/2020/09/09/
https://epsoweb.org/epso/epso-welcomes-the-europen-commissionss-study-regarding-the-status-of-novel-genomic-techniques-ngts-under-european-union-law/2021/04/30/

28 https://epsoweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/18_07_27_EPSO_ECJ-Ruling-_Commentary-notes-by-EPSO-members-and-partners.pdf

29 https://epsoweb.org/epso/epso-first-reaction-to-the-european-commissions-legal-proposal-for-a-regulation-of-the-european-parliament-and-of-the-council-on-plants-obtained-by-certain-new-genomic-techniques-and-their-fo/2023/07/06/

30 https://epsoweb.org/epso/epso-statement-on-the-european-commissions-legal-proposal-for-a-regulation-of-the-european-parliament-and-of-the-council-on-plants-obtained-by-certain-new-genomic-techniques-and-their-food-an/2023/11/06/
https://epsoweb.org/epso/must-protect-components-of-the-ngt-legislation-proposed-by-the-european-commission-annex-to-the-epso-statement-on-the-ecs-legal-proposal/2024/01/19/

31 https://epsoweb.org/wg-agricultural-technologies/must-protect-components-of-the-ngt-legislation-proposed-by-the-european-commission-annex-to-the-epso-statement-on-the-ecs-legal-proposal/2024/01/19/

32 https://www.weplanet.org/ngtopenletter

33 European Court of Justice delivers no justice to Europe on genome-edited crops, https://doi.org/10.1111/pbi.13200

Firstly, it is apparent that the areas of expertise of the newly appointed members show a strong bias towards applied plant biotechnology, which means that many of the newly appointed experts are actively involved in developing genetically engineered plants, including NGT plants. Conversely, this also means that there is a lack in expertise in regard to other aspects of expertise necessary for the assessment of GE plants, such as ecology, toxicology, nutrition, agricultural sciences, plant breeding and others. Molecular biologists are now predominant in the panel.

Secondly, many of the members are actively involved in projects that are funded by industry. Again, previous GMO panels set a precedent in regard to industry collaborators, but never quite to this extent. Some of these collaborations concern companies that file applications for market approval of GE plants that will be assessed by the GMO Panel, thus inevitably leading to conflicts of interest.

Further, as shown in the analysis, many of these industry collaborations have resulted in the filing of patent applications in which the GMO Panel experts are named as inventors. Although the dois show that in many cases, there is no direct financial gain associated with this status, it nevertheless shows a lack of distance to the interests of industry.

Another fact revealed by analysis of the dois is that the GMO Panel chair, Josep Casacuberta, is an advisor to industry on subjects related to EFSA risk assessment. According to his doi, this advisory role is ongoing despite his appointment as panel chair. Higher standards regarding conflicts of interest need to apply in these instances, and therefore EFSA should have restricted this consultancy.

However, the most striking aspect of the investigation is that nearly half of the new GMO Panel experts are actively engaged in political debates regarding GE (especially NGT) plants, and some of them hold leading positions in influential lobby groups calling for the deregulation of NGT plants, e.g. Pilar Cubas, who is even promising to influence EU politics on the subject. Furthermore, several members did not declare their support for or membership in lobby organisations, such as EU-SAGE, WePlanet or PRRI.

Indeed, there has never previously been such an extensive network of vested interests, lobby activities or involvement in ongoing political discussions on future regulation in the GMO Panel. The question arises as to why EFSA was not able to see this bias and appoint experts with a wider range of expertise, less industry cooperations, less interest in intellectual property rights and less involved in lobbying activities.

The current composition of the panel calls the independence of the EFSA GMO Panel into question and shows the need for more rigorous standards in the appointment process. Questions must also be raised regarding the responsibility of the EFSA's outgoing Executive Director, Bernhard Url, as he is ultimately the person who, at the end of a lengthy process involving several EFSA departments and committees, appoints all experts.[34]

These new appointments to the GMO Panel are also detrimental to the ongoing political discussion. In the past, Testbiotech has revealed several instances in which the EFSA has acted more like a service provider for the EU Commission than an independent authority.[35] Unless there are changes to the GMO Panel, there is little hope that anything will change. Therefore, when filling the new Executive Director position, strict attention must therefore be paid to competence and independence. In addition, the composition of the GMO Panel urgently needs correction.

34 https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/SOP-002_S.pdf
35 https://www.testbiotech.org/en/news/did-eu-commission-interfere-scientific-independence-efsa/