

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME OUTLINE

Conference on genome editing for food safety and crop improvement

October 13/14, 2022 Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague



food



society



energy

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The Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS), and the European Sustainable Agriculture through Genome Editing network (EU-SAGE) invite you to a conference on genome editing for food safety and crop improvement.

Over the last century, plant breeding has become much more knowledge-based and has accelerated the development of improved crop varieties. However, conventional practices in plant breeding will not suffice to reach in a short time frame more sustainable agricultural production. One of the recent innovations in plant breeding is genome editing which enables the development of desired plant varieties in a precise, more efficient and directed manner. There are many published studies that demonstrate the potential of genome editing to improve crop yield and quality, as well as to render agriculture more sustainable and climate resilient. Many applications are at pre-commercial stage but could reach the market in the short term, depending on the regulatory framework. In EU, all crop varieties obtained by using genome editing are currently subject to strict GMO regulations, which de facto prevents Europe from using and cultivating these genome-edited crops. In April 2021, the EU Commission published its study on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) including genome editing and concluded that the current legal framework is no longer fit for purpose. Therefore, the Commission proposed to initiate a targeted policy action on plants obtained from certain NGTs, specifically 'targeted mutagenesis' and 'cisgenesis'.

The CAS & EU-SAGE conference will assess the status of research and developments in genome editing in plant breeding and how this differentiates from classical GMO technology. In doing so, the conference aims at providing an overview of state-of-the-art scientific evidence with respect to applications of genome edited crops and the possible impact of the technology for providing solutions in the transition to more sustainable agriculture as outlined in the 'Farm to Fork' strategy and 'European Green Deal'. In addition, the CAS & EU-SAGE conference will address the potential socio-economic dimension of the use and cultivation of genome-edited crops in Europe as well as the impact of narratives in public opposition towards agricultural innovation, and how to counter this in future communication efforts. Finally, recommendations will be put forward on how the potential of genome-edited crops for more sustainable agriculture in Europe can be established with broader societal support.

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October 13

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-14:00 Welcome and Introduction

Eva ZAŽÍMALOVÁ, President of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic

14:00-14:40 Keynote

Dirk INZÉ, Coordinator of the EU-SAGE network, Belgium

14:40-16:00 Session I. The science behind genome editing of plants

Jaroslav DOLEŽEL, Institute of Experimental Botany of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic

Oana DIMA, EU-SAGE, Belgium

Aleš PEČINKA, Institute of Experimental Botany of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic

16:00-16:30 Coffee break

16:30-17:50 Session II. The potential of genome editing to address the sustainability

Petra JORASCH, Euroseeds, Belgium

Irene Sacristán SÁNCHEZ, DG Health and Food Safety, European Commission, Belgium

René CUSTERS, Vlaams Instituut voor Biotechnologie, Belgium

17:50-18:00 Closing remarks

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October 14

9:00-9:10 Welcome and Introduction

9:10-10:30 Session III. Potential impact of genome-edited crop cultivation
and use in Europe

Gregory JAFFE, Center for Science in the Public Interest, Washington

Kai PURNHAGEN, University of Bayreuth, Germany

Martin LEMA, Quilmes National University, Argentina

10:30-11:00 Coffee break

11:00-12:20 Session IV. Societal aspect and communication about plant breeding
innovations

Andrzej NOWAK, Re-Imagine Europa, Belgium

Svenja AUGUSTIN, Cluster of Excellence on Plant Sciences, Germany

Christian KAISER, Cluster of Excellence on Plant Sciences, Germany

Michaela ŠOJDROVÁ, Member of the European Parliament, Belgium

12:20-13:20 Round table

13:20-13:30 Closing remarks / Outlook

13:30 Lunch