

CropLife Australia Interim Policy Statement on Regulatory Oversight of Plants Developed Through New Breeding Techniques (NBTs)

Introduction

CropLife Australia recognises the importance of new techniques in plant breeding. In most cases, new breeding techniques (NBTs) are innovative improvements and refinements of traditional breeding methods used to optimise plant health, nutritional quality and yield.

CropLife is concerned about the unnecessary regulation of products developed using NBTs based simply on the breeding technique employed and not the characteristics of the final product.

In many cases, NBTs result in products which are similar to or indistinguishable at the genome level from products developed through traditional breeding methods that are established as safe due to their long history of use.

Desired Regulatory Outcome

That plants produced by NBTs which are indistinguishable or similar to plants developed through traditional breeding, or plants derived from natural variation in plant genomes, are regulated in the same way as conventionally bred plants.

General Policy – Regulation Should be Predictable and Commensurate with Risk

CropLife encourages the Australian Government to adopt a globally harmonised approach towards NBTs, and avoid unnecessary regulation of products developed through NBTs.

CropLife supports Australian Government policies that aim to foster innovation in plant breeding to increase food, feed and fibre production in a sustainable way.

The Australian Government should avoid regulating products developed through NBTs that are similar to or indistinguishable from products that may arise through natural genetic variation or traditional breeding methods, since such products do not present new safety risks.

Regulations, if needed, should be based on sound scientific principles and proportional to the degree to which the product is creating new potential risks to human health or the environment, and not solely on the process by which it was produced. Genomic changes produced by NBTs should be viewed in light of the inherent natural plasticity of plant genomes, the comparable genomic changes that occur with the use of traditional breeding methods, and long safe history of use of traditional plant breeding methods.

The Australian Government needs to provide clarity to product developers on the regulation of the products of NBTs. The regulation of plants produced by NBTs should be predictable in order for



industry and public research institutes to have a clear path-to-market for the development and commercialisation of any products developed through NBTs in a reasonable time frame. Ongoing lack of clarity hinders innovation and the benefits this may bring to Australian agriculture.