

Good afternoon

This is the Round Table on the biotechnological hegemony in food and farming AKA the 'Brave New World of Genome Editing'

First of all I wish to extend a warm welcome and our deepest thanks to our high-quality panel of speakers from several parts of Europe, who will touch upon different aspects of the rise of New GMO's in the EU political arena. I also thank the Institute of Social Sciences of UL and the Portuguese Stop GMO Platform (Plataforma Transgénicos Fora) to agree to be the organisers of this important debate .

New GMO's or new genomic/genetic techniques, which the industry behind it also likes to call 'New Breeding Techniques' , the babylonian confusion in names being designed to keep the public ignorant or at least confused about what is at stake, have now found a firm and official place on the EU's agenda, one of its big objectives.

Thanks to heavy lobbying by the Biotech industry these New GMOs have managed to infiltrate discussions on the Green Deal, the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies as well as the EU Climate Adaptation strategies. Within a narrative of innovation for sustainability, products that are in reality still poorly tested and poorly known and of which few or none are actually being commercialised, and about which evidence is increasingly pointing at very problematic unintended sideeffects, these new genomic techniques are acting like a Trojan Horse for GMOs to enter our markets, production and consumption with reduced or eliminated regulation.

The assault by agribusiness on politicians', farmers' and the general public's opinion is very reminiscent of that carried out in 1998 when agribusiness finally managed to defeat the moratorium on GMOs in Europe. The promises fore these New GMOs are by and large the same, even though the underlying techniques often rely on the techniques used for first generation GMOs, and even though each and every one of these promises has been disproven over time.

Unfortunately the whole charade feels like a nightmarish déjà-vu. EFSA is emitting positive opinions, many politicians are buying into the spiel of 'NGTs' contribution to a sustainable and resilient agri-food system,

maintaining high safety standards'. Very worryingly, the precautionary principle is being turned on its head, with claims that the PP should not stand in the way of 'important innovation'. It seems the EU is on its way to adopt the 'Innovative Principle' and throw away decades of work on a people, livelihoods, environment and justice focussed policy framework for regulating human activities.

The Biotech industry is claiming there is no Green Deal without gene editing, even though they have no evidence for this and while all the products in the pipeline are just that, still in the pipeline, at the stage of promises. The perverted claims about how we will not produce enough food nor combat hunger have also come up again.

All this and more will be placed under a critical magnifying lens by our speakers, who are all active in pushing back against the deregulation of these New GMOs.

In Portugal this is a largely unknown topic. There has so far not been any discussion or campaign on the issue. Plataforma Transgénicos Fora wishes to change this status quo, which is why we have launched a precampaign on our website with information on what these New GMOs are and what's at stake. We have also joined the European coalition to push back against the industry assault. We hope after today many of you will join us in the struggle.

Thank you and I will now pass the torch to José Luís Garcia, who has been studying technoscientific issues for several decades. He is a Sociologist, Senior researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences and Director of the publishing house 'Imprensa de Ciências Sociais', among other positions.