Animal breeders continue to advocate the responsible use of breeding technologies despite the ruling C-528/16 of the European Court of Justice

The European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders (EFFAB) is aware of NGO´s and consumers´ concerns about GMO, gene editing (GE) or genome manipulation. Animal breeders don't use GE to introduce genetic material from another species in the genome of animals, but intend to spread interesting characteristics and to accelerate processes that occurs naturally through breeding over many generations and without introducing foreign genes.

It is also important to highlight the environmental and societal benefits of these technologies in animal breeding while simultaneously addressing **consumer concerns**. The use of new GE practices is not solely for the production of plant species to make them "resistant to selective herbicides" or equivalents in animals. Improved animal health and welfare, more efficient use of resources, protection of European high quality and **sustainable animal products**, protection of wildlife are some of the benefits for European consumers from gene editing. Here are some examples how better breeding research and efforts of breeding companies could help farmers to improve welfare and productivity and reach societal challenges with GE techniques:

- **Animal health** ; creating resistance against diseases such as PRRS in pigs or Avian influenza in poultry, to increase the protection of livestock health. Increasing resistance in pigs to PRRS assists to reduce other associated diseases in pig farming and the overall use of antibiotics.
- **Animal welfare** ; enforcing hornless cattle to avoid the dehorning procedure of calves and protect farmers
- **Wildlife protection** ; gene editing in aquaculture can protect wild populations of fish from mixing with farm escapes
- **Better use of resources** ; improving the feed efficiency in poultry and aquaculture
- **Climate change** ; breeding of ruminants with lower methane emissions
- **Sustainability** ; with regards to a growing human population, the ongoing climate change and the economics of low income for farmers, gene editing is a tool to improve sustainability in livestock production

EFFAB considers that the decision stating that organisms obtained by mutagenesis are GMO is a missed opportunity for Europe to continue to be a competitive producer of high quality and innovate food and it's likely to hinder investment in animal production.

EFFAB encourages and asks the EU Commission, even considering this decision, to engage in a positive and constructive dialogue between scientists, food companies and consumers while building ***a legal and regulatory framework for safe animal innovation in Europe.*** *A case by case analyse at* ***European level*** *for animal issued from new breeding techniques is necessary to help answer societal challenges for food production and this technology must continue to be a help in the future to nourish Europe in a healthier, safe and sustainable way, with European Innovation.*

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Gene editing techniques represent a safe and efficient technology for animal producers and breeders, specifically when reproducing the exact modifications which already occur in nature. Scientists working on this technology must of course adopt ***strict ethical and food safety regulation****.*

EFFAB also asks the EU Commission to provide a legal import framework in order to avoid the introduction of Genome Edited animals and products of Genome Edited animals in Europe. Efficient methods have to be developed to ***identify and trace*** *Genome Edited animals or products. Otherwise, European animal producers and breeders will be unfairly competing against GE products imported from outside the EU, while they are prevented from using this technology.*

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