

## Press Release: GeneBEcon Midterm Symposium

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024

**The Horizon Europe project GeneBEcon held its Midterm Symposium on 20<sup>th</sup> February in Brussels, bringing together the project partners, stakeholders from across agri-food value chains and policymakers to discuss the progress of the NGTs legislation and the project's outcomes so far.**

On 20<sup>th</sup> February, GeneBEcon hosted close to 80 participants at its Midterm Symposium in Brussels. The Symposium served as a communication, dissemination and engagement event bringing together the project partners, stakeholders from across agri-food value chains and policymakers.

GeneBEcon aims to assess the challenges and benefits of using NGTs for developing more sustainable (raw) materials for the bioeconomy, as well as how different regulatory options impact biosafety data requirements, the likelihood of uptake, and overall socio-economic aspects. The Symposium provided a unique opportunity for stakeholders and policymakers to exchange with each other and project partners.

The first session of the Symposium focused on the current legislative process on NGTs. It featured high-level speakers: Mathias De Mesmaeker from the Belgian Federal Public Service of Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, representing the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council, Irene Sacristán Sánchez, the Head of the Biotechnology Unit at the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety of the EU Commission, and Jarka Chloupková, Policy Officer for the European Conservatives and Reformists Group of the EU Parliament, each providing an update and overview from their respective institutions.

This was followed by two sessions describing the project results until now. The first, outlining the expected implications of different regulatory options for NGTs on expected biosafety data requirements and their socio-economic impacts. Second, describing the case examples being developed in the project - a virus-resistant potato with altered starch composition, and microalgae producing high value compounds, whose leftover biomass will be used for poultry feed. This was followed by a presentation on the development of an NGTs Transition Plan and an interactive discussion on the main drivers affecting consumer choice.

*"I think the biggest value of such an event is the opportunity to discuss our research with very diverse stakeholders. In this way, we can ensure that we are not overlooking anything major and that the project's*



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outcomes can have a real-life impact.” says Amrit Nanda, Executive Manager of Plants for the Future and the event's main organiser.

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### GeneBEcon - capturing the potential of Gene editing for a sustainable BioEconomy

GeneBEcon is a Horizon Europe project that examines the innovation potential of gene editing for enabling a sustainable bioeconomy in the EU. Through the application of this technology in potato and microalgae, coupled with stakeholder and consumer engagement, GeneBEcon is assessing their expected contributions towards energy-efficient, low-input agricultural production and clean industrial processing, while at the same time considering social, economic, and regulatory implications.

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