

**Question for written answer E-000219/2019
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Mara Bizzotto (ENF)

Subject: Genome editing and its possible uses in agriculture: Request for the Commission's opinion

In its judgment of 25 July 2018, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that the category of GMO plants, as defined in Directive 2001/18/EC, includes plants created using genome editing technologies – innovative targeted gene mutation used to speed up the process of genetically improving crops in terms of yield, quality and sustainability. Genome editing involves mutations that are often indistinguishable from those that occur in nature.

More than 75 European centres and institutes, such as the Italian Society of Agricultural Genetics, take the view that the ECJ's ruling is based on definitions that have been made obsolete by scientific research and biotechnological progress and that it may undermine the global competitiveness of the European economy and efforts to protect the environment in the EU. Genome editing is also popular with many winegrowers, including the Strada del Torcolato Association and the Italian Independent Winemakers' Federation (FIVI), as it could help to reduce the need for pesticides. Some third countries already authorise genome editing.

- 1) In the Commission's view, could Directive 2001/18/EC be revised to bring about a shift away from the system of regulating the methods used to produce a new plant variety towards one based on the characteristics of the plants themselves?
- 2) Would it be possible to introduce exemptions from Directive 2001/18/EC, to include genome editing?
- 3) How will the Commission identify and check genome editing products imported from third countries?