

Seeds and other plant and forest reproductive material

On 5 July 2023, the European Commission proposed regulations on the production and marketing of plant reproductive material (PRM) and of forest reproductive material (FRM). The proposals aim to ensure the availability of high quality PRM and FRM, improved sustainability of new varieties and the preservation of genetic diversity that could be vital for adapting EU agriculture and forests to future climate change. The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) adopted its reports on 19 March 2024. Parliament is expected to vote on its first-reading position during the April II plenary session.

Background

Marketing of seeds, tubers, cuttings, rootstocks, seedlings, young plants and other types of reproductive material is currently governed by a dozen Council directives, the oldest from 1966. Eleven of them are up for review. The PRM directives are based on two pillars: the registration of new varieties and the certification of individual PRM lots. Conservation varieties that have been grown traditionally and are adapted to local and regional conditions can benefit from simpler registration if threatened by genetic erosion. FRM marketing works differently, but also follows a two-step process: the registration of the parent trees ('basic material') and the certification of the FRM before placing it on the market. A 2013 Commission attempt at [reform](#) failed because Parliament and the Council opposed applying the same rules to both PRM and FRM.

European Commission proposal

The Commission proposed [two regulations](#). The [PRM regulation](#) would simplify the legislative framework by replacing 10 current PRM directives. It would specify the rules for the conservation varieties, add sustainability criteria to the testing of PRM for agricultural crops, vegetables and fruit trees, and introduce rules on PRM for organic varieties. For the first time, it would allow exchange in kind of small quantities of seeds between farmers. The [proposed FRM rules](#) would improve the assessment of sustainability characteristics of parent trees and provide final users with information on the suitability of FRM for current and future climate conditions. Member States would be required to set up contingency plans to ensure sufficient FRM availability in case of extreme weather, wildfires or disease outbreaks.

European Parliament position

The AGRI committee worked on the two proposals as a package. The Committee [proposes](#) that [PRM](#) sold or transferred for gene bank activities, small quantities of PRM for dynamic conservation and PRM produced by farmers for their own use, be exempted from the rules under the new regulation. Farmers should be allowed to exchange small quantities of any type of PRM, not just seeds, including for monetary compensation. The new sustainability tests should only be mandatory for agricultural crops. Concerning [FRM](#), Member States should be able to get technical assistance from the Commission for their contingency plans. An official label with a QR code should link to instructions on how to take care of and plant FRM. Parliament is expected to vote on the AGRI reports during the April II plenary session.

First-reading reports: [2023/0227\(COD\)](#) and [2023/0228\(COD\)](#);
Committee responsible: AGRI; Rapporteur: Herbert Dorfmann (EPP, Italy). For further information see our 'EU Legislation in progress' briefings on [PRM](#) and [FRM](#).



[Outcome of the Conference on the Future of Europe](#): This proposal is relevant for measures 1(4), (6); 11(1).

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