



**16th of January plenary vote: Motion for a resolution on the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (B9-0035/2020); Please support amendments 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24**

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

With this letter, we are asking you to support a call for a global moratorium on so-called Gene Drives as part of the European Parliament's motion for a resolution on the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Biodiversity is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history. An estimate of 1 million species is threatened with extinction. This is the grim conclusion of the [landmark report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services \(IPBES\)](https://ipbes.net/global-assessment-report-biodiversity-ecosystem-services)<sup>1</sup>

**Gene Drives – a new eradication technology**

In the midst of this development, termed the planets 6th mass extinction, emerges a **new genetic engineering technology called Gene Drive**. This technology is enabled by genetic engineering tools like CRISPR/Cas9 and **makes it possible to genetically modify, replace and even eradicate wild species**.

Because the Gene Drive forces the inheritance of new and even detrimental traits to all offspring, Gene Drives can be used to eradicate entire populations and species in the wild. First applications could be the eradication of mice, rats, fruit flies and mosquitos. Possible targets are disease carrying insects, invasive species or agricultural pests.

<sup>1</sup> <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment-report-biodiversity-ecosystem-services>

However, it is by no means certain that Gene Drives will work as expected. Given the lack of comprehensive methodologies for technology or risk assessment, any release of Gene Drive Organisms, particularly at this early stage of development and, **poses very severe threats of harm** to biodiversity and the web of life.

Once released, Gene Drive Organisms could spread uncontrollably and irreversibly over time and distance. There are no means of recalling Gene Drive Organisms from nature or reversing their effects in nature, therefore releases of Gene Drive Organisms at this stage are not compatible with the precautionary principle and the UN Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), which seeks to uphold '*an adequate level of protection*'.

### **Gene Drives in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

Gene Drive Organisms have been discussed within the CBD since 2015 as part of the Convention's work addressing synthetic biology and as part of the discussions around risk assessment of living modified organisms (LMO) under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

At COP14 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Sharm-el-Sheik, [over 200 organisations called for a global moratorium on Gene Drive release.](#)

Unfortunately, existing provisions may not be sufficient to prevent first field trials with Gene Drive organisms planned in the near future. **COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming, China could be the last moment to enforce precaution and secure a global moratorium on the release of Gene Drive organisms into nature.**

Therefore, the European Union should take a clear position on Gene Drive Organisms in order to protect biodiversity globally, to uphold the precautionary principle as enshrined in EU law and to fully support the objectives of the CBD.

We therefore urge you, to support the following amendments:

- **AM 20** which outlines the dangers relating to Gene Drive Organisms
- **AM 21** calling for **horizon scanning, technology assessment, and monitoring** of new technological developments emerging from synthetic biology;
- **AM 22** calling for a **moratorium** on the release of Gene Drive organisms into nature, including field trials
- **AM 23** which seeks to ensure the **free, prior and informed consent** to technological applications which may impact the traditional knowledge, innovation, practices, livelihoods and use of land, resources and water of indigenous peoples and local communities;
- **AM 24** which seeks to enshrine the **precautionary principle, horizon scanning, technology assessment, and monitoring and a rights-based approach** as key pillars of the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework particularly with regard to the adoption of new technologies;

For further information on the topic you can refer to:

- a [two page Gene Drive briefing](#)
- the [Gene Drive report](#) on the science, applications, social aspects, ethics and regulations of Gene Drive technology by the European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility (ENSSER), Critical Scientists Switzerland (CSS) and the Federation of German Scientists (VDW), and its [executive summary](#)

- a [15 minute documentary film](#) on Gene Drive technology with statements from Gene Drive developers and other experts from all over the world

On behalf of the undersigned organisations.

Yours sincerely

**Mareike Imken**

Save Our Seeds/ Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft