



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE  
Institute for Health and Consumer Protection  
**Molecular Biology and Genomics Unit**



## **Mandate for an ENGL Working Group Seed Testing**

The WGST shall prepare an ENGL/EURL advice to the Commission concerning the testing of seed samples for the adventitious presence of GM seeds.

In preparing this advice the WGST shall take due account of, and describe the current practice of GMO seed testing in the Member States of the European Union.

As the practical detection limit for GM seed in non-GM seed lots can be lowered by means of sub-sampling and increased efforts of testing, the WGST is asked to estimate the relation between effort (cost) and theoretical detection limit for the most relevant crops.

### **Background**

In a number of Member States of the EU there is an active breeding industry that put seeds on the market in the EU and beyond. As some of these might also apply genetic engineering technologies for producing GMOs for the EU or non-EU markets, adventitious presence of GM seeds in conventional seed lots is difficult to be excluded.

At the same time seed is imported into the EU from countries where GMOs of the same species are planted and adventitious presence of GM seeds in imported conventional seed lots is difficult to be fully excluded.

Testing seed lots for the adventitious presence of GM seeds is practiced in EU member states. No threshold is set for labeling of seed lots if GM seeds are found to be present. In most EU countries sampling seems to be based on the ISTA seed testing rules for purity (to be verified by the WGST) but hitherto no EU wide practical guidance exists neither for seed sampling nor for the analytical methods to be applied.

### **Timeline**

The working group is expected to produce a final draft for approval by the ENGL Steering Committee to be held on 15-16 September 2014. At least two meetings are foreseen.