Production and marketing of plant reproductive material in the Union

2023/0227(COD) - 05/07/2023 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to replace 10 plant reproductive material (PRM) marketing Directives with a single Regulation.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: plant reproductive material (PRM) is plant material (for example seeds, cuttings, trees, roots, tubers, etc.) used for the reproduction of other plants. They are subject to strict EU rules on quality and health. However, rules on PRM already exist since 1966 and need to be revised to keep pace with developments in science, innovation, technology, and digitalisation whilst ensuring at the same time high quality, healthier and improved plants and trees.

The updated rules will guarantee stable yields by future-proofing new plant varieties by testing them for characteristics that can contribute to a more sustainable agri-food production. Seeds will be better adapted to the pressures of climate change, they will be more resistant to pests and thus contribute to reduced use of pesticides, and they will be more drought tolerant. The revision will ensure food security and help preserve the genetic diversity of cultivated crops.

CONTENT: the Commission proposal revises the legislation which applies to production and marketing of plant reproductive material by replacing 10 marketing Directives with a single Regulation.

The draft regulation lays down rules for the production and marketing in the Union of plant reproductive material, and in particular requirements for the production of PRM in the field and other sites, categories of material, identity and quality requirements, certification, labelling, packaging, imports, professional operators and the registration of varieties.

Rules are laid down concerning the conditions of cultivation of certain varieties that could have undesirable agronomic effects, including the cultivation for purposes beyond the production and marketing of PRM, for the production of food, feed and other products.

The proposal applies to a list of species of agricultural crops, vegetables, fruit plants and vine, with particular economic and social importance, such as food security, for the Union. However, it will not cover reproductive material for ornamental plants. It also excludes PRM exported to third countries.

The proposed regulation retains the two main pillars of the PRM marketing Directives, namely the registration of varieties and the certification of individual PRM lots.

Moreover, the proposal aims to:

- harmonise implementation, increase efficiency, reduce administrative burden and support innovation. In particular, it takes account of the need to ensure that production of PRM can adapt to evolving agricultural, horticultural and environmental conditions, face the challenges of climate change, to foster the protection of agro-biodiversity, and to meet increasing farmer and consumer expectations related to the quality and sustainability of PRM;

- facilitate the technical progress in PRM production and plant breeding, in accordance with the rapid evolution of European and global standards. It creates a framework for the introduction of digital technologies, and for the adoption of novel technologies, such as the use of bio-molecular techniques for the identification of varieties.

General objective

The general objective of this initiative is to ensure, for all types of users, PRM of high quality and diversity of choice, adapted to current and future projected climatic conditions that will in turn contribute to food security, protection of biodiversity and restoration of forest ecosystems.

More specifically, it aims to:

- increase clarity and coherence of the legal framework through simplified, clarified and harmonised basic rules on fundamental principles presented in a modern legal form;

- enable the uptake of new scientific and technical developments;

- ensure availability of PRM suitable for future challenges;

- support the conservation and sustainable use of plant and forest genetic resources.

- harmonise the framework for official controls on PRM;

- improve coherence of PRM legislation with the plant health legislation.

- provide more choice for amateur gardeners by lighter rules on market access.