



Directive 2001/18/EC on the Deliberate Release of GMOs

Summary


Directive 2001/18/EC governs the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) into the environment within the EU. It sets out strict procedures for risk assessment, approval, monitoring, and traceability of GMOs intended for field trials or market placement. Aimed at protecting human health and the environment, the Directive also allows Member States to restrict GMO cultivation on their territory. While not directly about food or feed, it plays a key role in regulating GMO crops at farm level.





Key Points

- Regulates the environmental release and market placement of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the EU
- Requires thorough environmental risk assessments before approval of GMO cultivation or use
- Introduces mandatory labelling and traceability of GMO products throughout the supply chain
- Allows EU Member States to restrict or ban GMO cultivation on their territory, even if EU-approved
- Includes post-release monitoring and reporting obligations for authorised GMO crops

Timeline

 March 2001: Directive 2001/18/EC is adopted, replacing Directive 90/220/EEC

 October 2002: Directive enters into force across EU Member States

 April 2015: Amended by Directive 2015/412, giving Member States more control over GMO cultivation



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Direct Impact

- Farmers growing GMO crops must comply with strict EU-level approval and monitoring requirements
- National bans or restrictions on GMO cultivation may apply, depending on local government decisions
- Increased administrative and recordkeeping burden for farms involved in GMO trials or production
- Public resistance to GMOs affects market acceptance and limits commercial viability in many regions



Tips

- Check your national rules—Member States may restrict or ban GMO cultivation regardless of EU approval
- If considering GMO crops, consult local authorities to understand approval status and compliance needs
- Engage with farming unions or advisory services to assess risks, benefits, and market demand
- Be transparent with customers—GMO traceability and labelling are legally required and closely monitored

Further Information

- Belgian Biosafety Server:
<https://www.biosafety.be/content/eu-regulatory-framework-deliberat-e-release-gmos>
- EU Policy Monitor on Directive 2001/18/EC:
https://www.eumonitor.eu/9353000/1/j4nvk6yhcbpeywk_j9v vik7m1c3gyxp/vitgbgi8ynz6



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