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PRESS RELEASE

Launch of the ANSES dialogue committee on "Biotechnology, Environment and Health"

The "Biotechnology, Environment and Health" dialogue committee, chaired by Mr Jacques Vernier, met for the first time today at ANSES. Its purpose is to create a forum for exchange with stakeholders on the Agency's scientific work in this area. It will address ANSES's new assessment missions, since 1 January 2022, relating to organisms and products derived from biotechnology, both in the agri-food sector and for medical applications.

Since its creation, ANSES has contributed to the assessment of health risks associated with the use of genetically modified plants in food or feed, known as GMOs. On 1 January 2022, its tasks were broadened to include certain activities previously performed by the High Council for Biotechnology.

In order to establish a dialogue with stakeholders on this key issue for society, ANSES set up a dialogue committee modelled on those it had set up already for radiofrequencies, nanomaterials and plant protection products.

The purpose of the "Biotechnology, Environment and Health" dialogue committee is to inform stakeholders about the scientific work ANSES is carrying out on this topic, while listening to their expectations and questions. It will therefore enable the various stakeholders to contribute to the debates before and after the expert appraisal work carried out by the Agency, and to express their different points of view and questions relating to the expert appraisal work on biotechnology planned or carried out, its areas of application and the associated public health and environmental issues.

Following a call for expressions of interest, the dialogue committee was set up with 25 members. In order to take account of the diversity of areas in which biotechnology is used, the committee brings together representatives of professional organisations, patients' associations, environmental protection associations, consumer protection groups, and industrial companies and company federations in the fields of biopharmacy, gene therapy and even seeds.

ANSES and biotechnology

Since its creation, the Agency has contributed to the European-level assessment of health risks associated with the use of genetically modified plants in food or feed. As the French Agency for Veterinary Medicinal Products, ANSES is also responsible for assessing, authorising and verifying all veterinary medicinal products, including those derived from biotechnology. In addition, the ANSES Plant Health Laboratory, as the National Reference Laboratory, develops or validates methods for detecting genetic modifications in plants, whether or not they have been authorised in France.

Since 1 January 2022, following the dissolution of the High Council for Biotechnology, ANSES has also been assessing the environmental risks of products containing organisms that meet the regulatory definition of GMOs and that are the subject of applications for use in an open environment: clinical trials of veterinary medicinal products, and at European level as part of marketing authorisation applications for food, feed and veterinary and human medicinal products containing GMOs, or the cultivation of plants in open fields. Furthermore, ANSES will carry out specific expert socio-economic reviews on the uses of biotechnology applications.

To implement its new missions, ANSES has strengthened its teams and the groups of independent experts producing the scientific assessments on which its opinions are based, with 10 new experts joining its "Biotechnology" working group in early 2022.

Find out more about ANSES's work on biotechnology

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