

Best Practices: Seed Industry Information-Sharing for Products of Gene Editing

Section I: Sector-Wide Best Practices

ASTA Commitment: Broad Dialogue on Plant Breeding Innovation

ASTA is committed to engaging in a dialogue on innovations in plant breeding with a broad range of stakeholders, including:

- ✓ Government and policy makers
- ✓ The agriculture value chain, including growers, the grain, produce, food and feed sectors
- ✓ Consumers

We recognize that each of these different stakeholders will desire different types and levels of information. Based on feedback and questions from stakeholders, we are prepared to have a dialogue and share information that meets the needs of this broad range of stakeholders.

ASTA: Proactive Sector-Wide Engagement and Dialogue with Government and the Agriculture Value Chain

The seed sector has a long history of producing increasingly healthy, safe and sustainable plant varieties. Proactive, structured and transparent engagement and dialogue is an opportunity – outside of formal regulatory processes – to deliver the most accurate information on new and emerging breeding methods:

- ✓ How these methods will likely be utilized in breeding and research programs
- ✓ Why these methods will be used – with a focus on the benefits for our planet, health and food
- ✓ The likely types of plant improvement targets
- ✓ Current international policy/regulatory situation
- ✓ New refinements on existing breeding methods and new methods on the horizon
- ✓ Information from the most knowledgeable and trusted/recognizable sources – public and private sector researchers, developers, seed industry professionals and breeders.

ASTA: Public-Facing Communication Focused on Consumers

We recognize that gaining a social license for the acceptance of new and evolving plant breeding methods requires a broad stakeholder effort – with full participation of the seed sector – to engage diverse decision-driving audiences, including policymakers and consumers. By developing educational resources on plant breeding innovation, like gene editing, and increasing transparency by making that information accessible to a broad public audience, we can continue to have a dialogue around the evolving story of plant breeding and how it has contributed to a safe, nutritious and diverse food and feed supply.

Section II: Developer Best Practices

The best practices in this section are intended to apply to developers of new commercial, gene-edited seed/plant products and to their licensees, as appropriate. The seed and plant breeding sector is diverse, both from a company and crop perspective. The sector includes agronomic, vegetable, flower, grass, cover, and specialty crop seeds. The diversity of companies is also a characteristic of the sector, including diversity in company size as well as operational reach that can be global, U.S.-only and regional/local.

Because of this diversity, the nature of information-sharing and communication may be different, depending on crop-type, commercial reach of the company and whether a company is directly active in developing new seed/plant products through gene editing.

Other considerations are:

- ✓ Diversity of supply chains
- ✓ Diversity of markets
- ✓ Diversity of end-users

Developer: Quality Management Systems in Place

- ✓ Developers commit to follow the [ASTA Guide to Seed Quality Management](#) and the [ASTA Guide to the Evaluation of Gene Edited Plants](#), or the equivalent, relevant industry guidance.

Developer: Compliance with Laws and Regulations

- ✓ An overarching commitment is compliance with relevant laws, regulations and standards in the country in which the developer operates, including the mandatory consultations in intended markets for the determination of whether a product falls under current biotechnology regulations.

Developer: Stakeholder Engagement Plans and Stakeholder Dialogues

ASTA members are committed to achieving transparency with the food and feed value chain, government stakeholders and consumers. Individual members will continue to share information according to their business, marketing and commercialization plans. Beyond the structured, seed sector-wide engagement with these stakeholders, ASTA members will consult with stakeholders when the use of gene editing is for development of a commercial product and not for discovery/researcher purposes.

- ✓ Based on business, marketing and commercialization plans, developers will inform regulatory authorities about their products that are exempt from pre-market regulatory reviews under current biotechnology regulations that are intended to be commercialized.

Developers should put into place stakeholder engagement and outreach plans for independent stakeholders dialogues including:

- ✓ Developing stakeholder engagement plans at an early, pre-commercial stage for the specific crop
- ✓ Training staff to engage effectively in stakeholder dialogues as appropriate
- ✓ Sharing with stakeholders information about the global regulatory statues of specific products
- ✓ Implementing process management systems to support relevant domestic or international regulatory restrictions and identity preservation or marketing requirements.
- ✓ Irrespective of the breeding method used, sharing information on commercial products with their interested customers and third parties according to their business, marketing and commercialization plans while respecting confidentiality.

These consultations will take place before product commercialization and will take into account existing supply chain structures.

Verification of Best Practices

- ✓ Developers are committed to internal and external verification of company practices and processes which are aligned with the best practices in this document
- ✓ Developers will have the flexibility to choose third party verifiers and to use different verifiers for different aspects of these best practices
- ✓ The underlying criteria used in choosing a verifier will be independence and objectivity