



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Directorate B. Quality, Research & Innovation, Outreach
The Director

Brussels,
PP/nb(2019)8230949

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your e-mail of 24 October 2019 (Int. Ref. ARES (2019)6609285) asking whether the use of electrons beams or irradiation for disinfection of seeds before the harvest is authorised in organic production and whether vegetables derived from such irradiated seeds can be certified organic.

First of all, I bring to your attention that ionising radiation is prohibited in the treatment of organic food and feed or other raw materials used in organic food or feed in accordance with Article 10 of Regulation (EC) No 834/2007¹. Ionising radiation is defined by Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom².

The prohibition has been confirmed by Regulation (EU) No 2018/848 on organic production³, which will apply as from 1 January 2021. Whereas (23) of the referred Regulation states that the use of ionising radiation is incompatible with the concept of organic production and consumers' perception of organic products. In addition, Article 5 referring to the general principles of organic production lays down: "*(i) the exclusion from the whole organic food chain of animal cloning, of rearing artificially induced polyploid animals and of ionising radiation;*". Also, Article 9 on general production rules states: "*Ionising radiation shall not be used in the treatment of organic food or feed, and in the treatment of raw materials used in organic food or feed.*"

¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02007R0834-20081010&qid=1396976187958&from=EN>

² Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom of 5 December 2013 laying down basic safety standards for protection against the dangers arising from exposure to ionising radiation, and repealing Directives 89/618/Euratom, 90/641/Euratom, 96/29/Euratom, 97/43/Euratom and 2003/122/Euratom.

³ [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation \(EC\) No 834/2007 \(OJ L 150, 14.6.2018 p.1 \)](#)

[REDACTED]

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In order to assess whether electron irradiation can be used in the treatment of seed in organic production, it would be necessary to assess the compatibility of this technique with the principles and rules of organic production as defined in Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, and determine whether this technique can be considered a ionising radiation (which is prohibited in organic production).

On this purpose, the Commission has the possibility to ask the group of experts for technical advice on organic production (EGTOP) for an opinion as to the compatibility of certain techniques with the objectives, criteria and principles of organic production. This occurred for example with respect to the plasma gas technique, an electronic preservation practice of organic food and feed of which assessment is included in the EGTOP Report on Food III of 2014.

The report is available at the following address:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/egtop-reports-organic-production_en

However, a thorough assessment can be done only after a complete request, with relevant scientific technical information, is submitted to the European Commission by one of the EU Member States. Therefore, in case you are interested, I would recommend you to contact a national competent authority in organic production. The list of competent authorities is available here:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/organic-farming/becoming-organic-farmer/organics-country_en

The present opinion is provided on the basis of the facts as set out in your e-mails of 24 October 2019 and expresses the view of the Commission services and does not commit the European Commission. In the event of a dispute involving Union law it is, under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, ultimately for the European Court of Justice to provide a definitive interpretation of the applicable Union law.

Yours sincerely,

