Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) free

Goal	Avoid the use of GMOs.
Short description of the measure	A genetically modified organism (GMO) is the one in which at least one gene (called transgene) has been introduced into its genetic material from another organism using recombinant DNA technology. Despite the "Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 on genetically modified food and feed" lays down specific procedures for assessing and authorizing GMOs, there are strong arguments that have been put forward against the use of GMOs in agriculture not only for their potential negative effects on human health and socio-economic effects, but also for their potential negative effects on the environment and biodiversity.
Quality elements of soundly implemented biodiversity measures	The farm/crop is declared GMO free, meaning that no GMO are cultivated and that no external GMO-related products are used (i.e. livestock feedstuff).
Effects on biodiversity (ecosystems, species, soil biodiversity)	 There are several counterproductive environmental effects related to the use of GMOs such as: ▪ herbicide-resistant genes inserted into other organisms' DNA (such as weeds), ▪ genes that mutate with harmful effect, ▪ development of resistance in insect populations exposed to the GM crops, ▪ "sleeping" genes could be accidentally switched on and ▪ active genes could become "silent", etc.
Other positive effects/benefit for the farmer	GMO are closely linked by a few companies in the world that sell to farmers GMO seeds and related products (in most cases these products are herbicides for which the seeds/plants sold are resistant). Despite the productivity of these varieties is supposed to be higher (which is not always true, at least in the EU context with GMO and non-GMO corn for silage), production costs and economic independence of farmers have shown to be a significant limitation. This measure is closely linked to another one about the use of traditional and local varieties, that are very interesting for being adapted to local conditions and for allowing a potential differentiation in markets.
Indicator/key data	▪ Total surface declared GMO free.
Reference	▪ https://es.greenpeace.org/es/trabajamos-en/agricultura/transgenicos/

Further information: Knowledge Pool

This Action Fact Sheet belongs to the training package for managers of standard organisations and companies and was developed within the project LIFE Food & Biodiversity (Biodiversity in Standards and Labels of for the Food Industry). The main objective of the project is to improve the biodiversity performance of standards and sourcing requirements in the food industry by helping standard organisations to integrate efficient biodiversity criteria into their schemes and motivating food processing companies and retailers to include comprehensive biodiversity criteria into their sourcing guidelines.

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