

To the members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development:

Yesterday afternoon during our testimony on behalf of Nature Canada, I mentioned a 2020 article reporting on implementation of the Norway *Gene Technology Act*, and that the authors say that assessing the sustainability, ethical, and societal impacts of genetically-modified or genome-edited organisms for food or feed is both “feasible and justified.”

This was in support of our statements that mandatory consideration of whether a new living organism to be manufactured or imported to Canada through Part 6 of the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* is “demonstrably needed” is both possible and necessary in order to increase public scrutiny of proposed new organisms and prevent pollution.

In response, Mme Pauzé asked for this paper. It is available at <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11948-020-00222-4>.

I also mentioned a 2019 IUCN Issues Brief, outlining how the field of “synthetic biology” (closely aligned with the subject-matter of Part 6 of CEPA) is “fraught with uncertainty,” “may affect the cultures, rights and livelihoods of local and indigenous communities, which manage, govern, reside in or depend on a large part of the world’s biodiversity,” and that “in assessing risk, national decision-makers may be required to consider different factors, including socio-economic concerns as well as impacts on indigenous and local communities. Informed consent or approval and involvement of potentially affected indigenous peoples and local communities should be a prerequisite to introducing engineered gene drives into the environment. Legislation may provide for monitoring of regulated activities, with regulation revised frequently to keep up to date with technological changes.”

The Issues Brief can be found and downloaded here: <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-brief/synthetic-biology-and-its-implications-biodiversity-conservation>.

Regards,

Hugh Benevides
Legislative Advisor
Nature Canada

for Mark Butler
Senior Advisor
Nature Canada