From Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, Chair

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

24 October 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

Organisms obtained by mutagenesis
I was passed a copy of a letter dated 13 September sent to you by a number of organisations, including the John Innes Centre, NIAB and Rothamsted Research, regarding organisms obtained by mutagenesis. Their letter followed the judgment passed down by the CJEU on this matter (C-528/16). I enclose a copy of their letter.

Their letter raises a number of concerns about the impact, including on UK researchers, of that judgment on the future relationship between the UK and the EU. Of particular interest to me, in my capacity as Chair of the Science and Technology Committee, were their concerns that:

We believe that any barrier to innovation in plant breeding at this time should be of great concern to the government. It increases yet further the gulf between fundamental science and commercialisation that the government’s Agritech Strategy and Industrial Strategy aim to bridge. It reduces the potential for the research talent in this country to provide return on public investment and discourages the movement of world-leading scientists to UK institutes and universities. The costs associated with conducting field trials under GMO regulations are extremely restrictive to research institutes and also to small biotech companies.

I would be grateful for your assessment of this statement, and for confirmation that Defra will continue to take a science-based approach to regulation, including after the UK has left the European Union.

Yours,

Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP
Chair