

Nanomaterials or Nanobiostimulants: When Will We Have a Legally Recognized Definition?

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To respond to growing farmer interest in having access to plant biostimulants, European lawmakers included them in the new EU Fertilising Products Regulation that went into force in July 2019. The EU Fertilising Products Regulation provides a common definition of plant biostimulants as fertilising product the function of which is to stimulate plant nutrition processes independently of the product's nutrient content with the sole aim of improving one or more of the following characteristics of the plant or the plant rhizosphere: (a) nutrient use efficiency; (b) tolerance to abiotic stress; (c) quality traits; (d) availability of nutrients in the soil or rhizosphere. The EU Fertilising Products Regulation sets high standards for product safety requirements and effectiveness, and offers access to a Single European Market even though it will co-exist alongside national laws.

In 2011, the Biostimulant Industry gathered together and founded the European Biostimulant Industry Council (EBIC), which is now 70 members strong. Since the foundation, EBIC was aimed to participate proactively in relevant regulatory discussions at the European Commission, and to advocate an operating environment that would create a truly European market for biostimulants.

To promote the use of nanobiostimulants in agriculture, a similar path should be followed. Thus, the challenge of Industry and Academia for the coming years will be to join forces to get a sound definition of nanobiostimulants and to establish standards for safety requirements and effectiveness, enabling the Authority to address the regulation of their market.