



IBMA Council vote to include RNA within the scope of the IBMA Biocontrol Definition

IBMA formally adopted its biocontrol definition in 2019. The IBMA definition is a “living document”. It recognises that new technologies are constantly under development and new technologies would be reviewed as appropriate for inclusion or not in the IBMA biocontrol definition. This is done by the IBMA Scoping Committee, which comprises the IBMA Council plus the IBMA Technical and Regulatory Director.

The IBMA Scoping Committee met on 14 April 2026. The objective of this meeting was to **review the available information on RNAi and to determine whether this technology falls within the scope of the IBMA definition of biocontrol**. RNA interference (RNAi) is a naturally occurring biological mechanism found in plants, animals, and fungi. It functions by using double-stranded RNA (dsRNA) or small interfering RNA (siRNA).

Following a review of the scientific evidence presented and hearing experts from academia and industry explain their reflections, the Council discussed the members comments and the evidence presented and made the unanimous decision to include RNA within the scope of the IBMA biocontrol definition.

The new wording with respect to RNA that will be included in the IBMA biocontrol definition is below.

*Natural substances consist of one or more components that originate from nature, including but not limited to: plants, algae/microalgae, animals, minerals, bacteria, fungi, protozoans, peptides, proteins (e.g. enzymes, antibodies), **RNA (involved in RNAi), viruses, viroids, and mycoplasmas.** They can either be **sourced from nature or are nature identical if synthesized**. This definition excludes semiochemicals and microbials, which have their own definition.*

Among natural substances, RNA (involved in RNAi), sourced from nature, is deemed nature-identical provided all of the following conditions are met

- **they contain only naturally occurring nucleotides**
- **the biological breakdown occurs in a predicted way according to a natural pathway.**
- **such modifications do not change the intended biological function against a target mRNA in the target organism, including pests, pathogens or weeds.**

The work was led by the Natural Substances Professional Group within a subgroup of 10 expert members. The group was moderated by Marise Borja and the IBMA Secretariat. Six meetings were held involving IBMA subgroup members, two academic experts, and two RNAi companies.

Natural Substance Professional Group members were provided with the following documents for review and comment:

- Academic expert paper prepared by Dr Athanasios Dalakouras from the Institute of Industrial and Forage Crops, Department of Plant Production (Larissa, Greece).
- Draft Scoping Committee review paper

Member comments were shared with the Scoping Committee.