

Is there gap in federal regulation of newer GMOs?

Critics say a loophole in federal regulations for genetically engineered crops will backfire against biotech companies.

Under current rules, USDA can only restrict biotech crops if they incorporate genes that pose a possible plant pest risk.

Many common genetically modified crops relied on a soil bacteria for gene transfer and thus were regulated until the agency determined they weren't a hazard to other plants.

Since 2011, though, USDA has allowed companies to freely cultivate biotech crops without any environmental analysis because they're not made with genes from plant pathogens.

Recent examples include varieties of glyphosate-resistant tall fescue, a non-bruising potato and a higher-density pine tree.

These approvals of biotech crops are a "trickle that turned into stream" and undermine claims by large biotech developers that genetically modified organisms are robustly scrutinized by the federal government, said George Kimbrell, attorney for the Center for Food Safety, a group that wants stronger biotech regulations.

The Biotechnology Industry Organization believes that federal agencies adequately regulate biotech crops, including those produced with gene guns that aren't considered possible plant pests, said Clint Nesbitt, the group's director of regulatory affairs for food and agriculture.

Those that are resistant to herbicides, like certain turf grasses, would still need to be approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, he said.

"Current regulations cover all the risk of biotech," Nesbitt said, adding that non-GMO crops aren't subject to any regulatory scrutiny.

Read full, original article: [Biotech critics claim GMO loophole will backfire](#)