

Advances in genetic engineering highlights fractured regulatory structure

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As the battle over GMO labeling plays out in supermarkets and in Congress, the definition of genetically modified organisms is fuzzier than ever. GMO regulation repurposed for GM technology. The rules never worked well, and new, precise gene-editing techniques are testing them further.

These technological advances are fast making the old regulations obsolete. “We’ve basically got a gaping hole in the USDA’s jurisdiction,” says Alison Peck, an agricultural law professor at West Virginia University.

The regulatory loopholes don’t end with the USDA. Unlike in Europe, which has a central authority on food biotech, responsibility for GMOs in the US is fractured among three separate agencies: the USDA, EPA and FDA.

New genetic engineering methods are also dredging up a more fundamental question: Should GMOs be regulated based on the process used to create them or the the novelty of the DNA sequence?

Perhaps more importantly, though, advanced techniques have made it easier to create new, distinct categories of GMOs. Animals or plants can be modified to lack a gene, modified to contain a gene from the same species but different breed, or modified to contain genes from a different species entirely.

Regulations tailored to GMOs have been thirty years in coming, and the current rehaul will undoubtedly take a long time. Hopefully, not so long that the new regulations are obsolete again by the time they’re ready.

Read full, original post: [New Gene-Editing Techniques Mean a Lot of GMO Loopholes](#)