

## European Union ‘dragging its feet’ on gene-edited crop regulations

Plant scientists say that new editing tools, including CRISPR–Cas9, involve no more than making tiny, precisely targeted changes to a gene that are indistinguishable from natural mutations. But opponents say that any form of meddling with genes is potentially perilous.

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Two years ago the European Commission requested all member states to hold back on giving the all-clear on gene editing while it considered its options. Now its hand is being forced, ever so slowly, by the referral of the issue by France to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) last October [2016]. ... [French non-governmental organizations and trade unions] argued that easy-to-use, modern gene-editing tools will encourage large numbers of new plants to be created whose environmental impacts are uncertain.

[A] decision is not expected before 2018 because the case is so politically sensitive. That’s a long time to wait, given that so much is at stake. GM-style regulation is complex and exorbitantly costly. CRISPR technology, although very new, has already led to many gene-edited plants that are ready for outdoor field trials. Such studies should not be held up.

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Plant scientists should spend the waiting time engaging in public dialogue ... about the safety and value of gene editing. Reason and science need to prevail this time.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Gene editing in legal limbo in Europe](#)**