CRISPR crops focused on sustainable farming could soften African resistance to genetic engineering

[Nteranya Sanginga is director general of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture.]

The role of genetic engineering in agriculture and food has generated enormous interest and controversies, with large-scale embrace by some nations and wholesale bans by others.

Many studies have been done and much research remains to be done on the impact genetically modified organisms (GMO) can have on broader food systems.

Fast-moving developments, however, suggest that lines drawn in the sand both for or against the broader use of GMOs risk becoming a distraction, particularly in Africa.

…

It appears we are on the brink of a deluge of new discoveries … many of which may not need the kind of capital-intensive agricultural operations where GMOs were first developed and can instead directly address the needs of smallholders in developing countries and the specific food and nutrition security and climate change challenges they face.

Genome editing can now economically be applied to the crop cultivars that farmers in a given locale prefer, consisting of highly targeted interventions that can address specific challenges, and don't take years of breeding to consolidate.

It's a new world. Let's have a new debate, not the old one.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: The Challenge Ahead: Harnessing Gene Editing to Sustainable Agriculture

For more background on the Genetic Literacy Project, read GLP on Wikipedia