

Will GMO-wary public embrace gene-edited food crops? 'It's more social science than science'

Green stalks have only just begun to sprout in the test fields where biotech giant DuPont Pioneer is planting rows of a new genetically edited corn. But across the street, in the company's sprawling research campus, executives are already fretting about how to sell it to the world.

On one hand, this corn is a revolution: It will probably be the first plant to market developed through the cutting-edge genome-editing technique called CRISPR-Cas.

On the other, the industry's last big breakthrough of this kind — genetically modified organisms, or GMOs — was an unqualified public-relations disaster, even according to its progenitor, Monsanto.

Wary of that, DuPont Pioneer, which is developing a strain of drought-resistant waxy corn, is proactively neutralizing skeptical consumers — years before these crops will even be available. The company recently began hosting CRISPR focus groups and [launched a website](#) on the technique, complete with animated videos.

The goal is to avoid the sort of public backlash that rocked Monsanto in the late 1990s and still plagues agriculture two decades later. In the United States, consumer skepticism of genetically modified crops has forced biotech companies into long, costly battles over issues such as whether these foods should be labeled; elsewhere in the world, the public outcry has prevented seeds from winning government approval.

"It's more about social science than science," said Neal Gutterson, the vice president of research and development at DuPont Pioneer. "[It's] ultimately about getting social license for this technology."

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Forget GMOs. The next big battle is over genetically 'edited' foods](#)