

How gene-edited crops could spell the end of the infamous term ‘GMO’

Political and social controversies, as well as complications of plant breeding, intellectual property, and regulation, have compromised the promised impact of genetically engineered – typically transgenic – crops designated as “GMOs.”

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For the time being, Sweden, Canada, and the United States have decided to not classify genome-edited plants as GMOs. The reasoning is the absence of transgenesis in genome-edited crops: no “foreign” DNA need be involved. In this sense, genome-edited crops are more like precisely site-specific mutagenised plants than transgenic plants in which incorporation of a transgene is uncertain.

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Organic farmers can grow mutagenised crops, without labels or special regulatory approvals.

However, other genome-edited crops have undergone more substantial editing.

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Variance among genome-edited plants thus adds a further layer of difficulty in defining exactly a “GMO”.

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The term GMO – variously defined – is becoming ambiguous, more a normative and political construct than a biologically meaningful one. Genome editing as a whole thus challenges existing governmental regulatory structures designed to manage differences among organisms bred for new traits by different technologies. It is not a reach to predict the end of the GMO as a cornerstone of regulating agricultural technology and flashpoint of conflict restricting progress.

Read full, original post: [The End of the GMO? Genome Editing, Gene Drives and New Frontiers of Plant Technology](#)