

## Plant scientists embrace USDA decision to not regulate gene-edited crops

Researchers in the US have been given the go-ahead to use gene-editing techniques to alter crops and plants. The decision opens the door for scientists to create a new generation of genetically altered crops without serious restriction and paves the way for approvals for similar work in Britain and the rest of Europe.

The decision – by the US Department of Agriculture – has delighted scientists who had feared that limitations on the creation and growing of genetically modified crops would also be imposed on crops created using far simpler gene-editing techniques.

“I think this decision by American legislators will have all sorts of benefits in the long run,” said Professor Denis Murphy of the University of South Wales. “This is a win-win situation because agriculture for gene-editing is cheaper, faster, simpler and more precise than the genetic modification of plants, in which a gene is taken from one organism and moved to another.”

The European Court of Justice indicated in January that it does not think crops created through gene-editing techniques should be regulated by the rules that govern genetically modified organisms in Europe. “At the same time, Britain’s Acre – the advisory committee on releases into the environment – also seems to be sympathetic to this position,” said Professor Huw Dylan Jones of Aberystwyth University. “It is very encouraging.”

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