

Will weed-zapping AI robots disrupt market for herbicides and GMO seeds?

In a field of sugar beet in Switzerland, a solar-powered robot that looks like a table on wheels scans the rows of crops with its camera, identifies weeds and zaps them with jets of blue liquid from its mechanical tentacles.

Undergoing final tests before the liquid is replaced with weedkiller, the Swiss robot is one of new breed of AI weederers that investors say could disrupt the \$100 billion pesticides and seeds industry by reducing the need for universal herbicides and the genetically modified (GM) crops that tolerate them.

Dominated by companies such as Bayer, DowDuPont, BASF and Syngenta, the industry is bracing for the impact of digital agricultural technology and some firms are already adapting their business models.

The stakes are high. Herbicide sales are worth \$26 billion a year and account for 46 percent of pesticides revenue overall while 90 percent of GM seeds have some herbicide tolerance built in, according to market researcher Phillips McDougall.

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[E]coRobotix, developer of the Swiss weeder, believes its design could reduce the amount of herbicide farmers use by 20 times. The company said it is close to signing a financing round with investors and is due to go on the market by early 2019.

Read full, original post: [Robots fight weeds in challenge to agrochemical giants](#)