

Organic farming advocate Klaas Martens comes out in favor of gene-edited crops

Klaas Martens, a prominent voice in the organic movement and a third-generation grain and livestock farmer, says he would be open to using gene-edited crops, as long as they mimic naturally occurring varieties.

That surprise comment, made during a panel discussion at the second edition of CRISPRcon, a gene-editing convention held here this week, is at odds with both federal organic policy and the movement's cultural orthodoxy. His statements reveal the complexity of defining "genetic modification" as the technology rapidly changes—changes that could bring about an identity crisis of sorts for organic stakeholders.

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"If it's used in the same way that current products are, then I wouldn't have any interest," he says, comparing gene-edited crops to "Roundup-ready" crops, [which are genetically spliced with plant and bacterial DNA to resist herbicides](#). "If it could be used in a way that enhanced the natural system, and mimicked it, then I would want to use it. But it would definitely have to be case by case."

Martens's comments are surprising because organic products, as [defined](#) by law under the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), cannot be certified if they are genetically modified (GMO), or contain individual genetically modified ingredients.

Read full, original post: [At CRISPRcon, an organic luminary embraces gene editing. Will the industry follow?](#)