

## European court appears poised to rule that gene edited crops should not be regulated as GMOs

Gene editing in agriculture takes centre stage [July 25th] when Europe's highest court rules in a case that could determine the fate of the technology that is already making waves in the field of medicine.

The European Union has long restricted the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) widely adopted around the world, but there is legal uncertainty as to whether modern gene editing of crops should fall under the same strict GMO rules.

The biotech industry argues that much of gene editing is effectively little different to the mutagenesis that occurs naturally or is induced by radiation – a standard plant breeding method since the 1950s.

But environmentalists, anti-GM groups and farmers concerned about the potential environmental and health impacts of all genetically engineered products fear that allowing gene editing would usher in a new era of “GMO 2.0” via the backdoor.

Gene editing with the CRISPR/Cas9 tool and other techniques has the potential to make hardier and more nutritious crops – as well as offering drug companies new ways to fight human disease.

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So far, the signs are that the court may lean towards the biotech industry's view. [European Court of Justice or ECJ] advocate general Michal Bobek advised in January that organisms could be exempt from GMO rules if they did not have added foreign DNA.

The advocate general's view is not binding but is usually followed by ECJ judges.

**Read full, original article:** [Battle lines drawn as EU court weighs fate of gene-edited crops](#)