

## Ahead of EU decision on new breeding techniques, Belgium acknowledges field trials of CRISPR-edited corn

Silently, the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology (VIB) has been conducting a field trial with [CRISPR-edited] maize for a year and a half. The...new sensational technique...is not clearly regulated in Europe. Nevertheless, the [Belgian] government [approved the trial].

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In laboratories worldwide, experiments with the CRISPR/Cas9 method are currently taking place. But confidential documents collected by De Morgen show that researchers from the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology...have been planting [corn that was] changed with the new technology.

VIB spokesman René Custers confirmed the existence of the field trial. He emphasized that the trial represents fundamental research. "With the knowledge we gain, [he said], "we hope to find ways to better arm plants against [environmental stress]."

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On [July 25th], the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg [will] settle the discussion on new [gene-editing] techniques. "The question is whether such a plant is a GMO and in order to obtain certainty about it, we applied to the Belgian government. They confirmed to us that our maize plants do not fall under the provisions of Belgian GMO legislation," says Custers. "Of course it is exciting now because the European Court's ruling can change that... Hopefully there will now be clarity. We have been urging Europe for a few years now."

*Editor's note: This article was originally published in Dutch. This English summary has been prepared with Google Translate and edited for clarity.*

**Read full, original article:** [Geheime proef met DNA-gehackte maïs in Vlaanderen: "Ik ben verbaasd en teleurgesteld"](#) (Paywall)