

Viewpoint: Europe has traded crop biotechnology for 'faith-based' agroecology

We are living in a new Dark Age in Europe where innovation and technology are being rejected at an alarming rate. While reactionary pressure is being seen from chemicals to pharmaceuticals and from vaccines to food manufacturing, nowhere has the situation been as severe as in plant biology and agritechnology. At events, panels and debates in Brussels, it often feels as if scientists and researchers from this sector are not welcome at the table.

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It took the EU three years to renew the authorisation for glyphosate (for five instead of 15 years) despite the overwhelming scientific consensus. A variety of novel plant breeding technologies are being held in EU regulatory limbo by a band of anti-industry activists and organic food industry opportunists. Groups in UNEP and the FAO are investing in faith-based agroecology theories at the peril of Western agricultural models. Seed treatments are out of favour following from the EU ban on all neonicotinoids (even non-flowering crops like sugar beets), leaving farmers to use older, less efficient pesticides (that are often more hazardous to pollinators).

It is not a good time to be a seed researcher in Europe.

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