

## EU's 'stringent' gene-edited crop regulations starting to 'chill' plant breeding research

Three months after the European Union's top court gave gene-edited crops the same stringent legal status as genetically modified (GM) organisms, researchers across the world are starting to feel the pinch. And some are becoming increasingly vocal in their opposition to the ruling.

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"A maize field trial we've been conducting in Belgium for over a year and a half was suddenly considered a GM field," says Dirk Inzé, science director at the VIB–UGent Center for Plant Systems Biology in Ghent, Belgium.

As a result of the ruling, he says, local authorities have insisted on extra precautionary measures, such as placing a fence around the researchers' plot and completing extensive documentation.

Meanwhile, a Belgian start-up that planned to use CRISPR technology to help Africa's banana industry says it lost its financing. And a company in Brazil says it has put millions of dollars' worth of gene-editing projects focused on soya beans on hold because its major market is in Europe.

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"We see a chilling effect on plans for performing research with CRISPR-edited plants in the field," says René Custers, manager of regulatory and responsible research at the VIB, life sciences research institute, based in Belgium. "The climate for precision breeding in general and CRISPR in particular has worsened after the ECJ ruling," he adds.

**Read full, original article:** [Strict EU ruling on gene-edited crops squeezes science](#)