

Belgium permits CRISPR-edited corn field trial, halted after landmark EU court decision, to continue

On April 12, 2019 [the Vlaams Instituut voor Biotechnologie in Belgium] was granted a permit for its field trial with maize plants that contain small surgical CRISPR-induced heritable changes. Obtaining this permit allows VIB to continue the field work that was already initiated in 2017.

A European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling of July 2018 triggered a decision by the Belgian authorities that such a CRISPR experiment requires a permit. Before the ruling, this was not the case. The [court] decided that small heritable changes (so-called mutations) induced through CRISPR are not exempt from [Europe's] GMO legislation, even though the same mutations elicited via ionizing radiation or chemicals do not need to follow these rules.

...

In the maize plants for the field trial, mutations are induced in genes involved in the repair of DNA damage. The researchers hope that this will make DNA damage in these plants caused by....heat, UV radiation, drought....to accumulate more easily....[T]he plants can be used as a biosensor to signal the consequences of environmental stress at the level of DNA....These plants are not meant to be further developed and will never enter the market....

Read full, original article: [Permit for CRISPR maize field trial that aims to measure climate stress](#)