

May election offers Europe chance to embrace gene editing and 'smart agriculture,' boost sustainable farming

On May 26, Europeans will be able to vote to elect new MEPs. This election will no doubt provide an opportunity to take stock of agri-industry and the many problems it raises between Member States. However, will the solution to this issue be a political one? Or will it come from the new concept of smart agriculture, which is an increasingly well-trodden path.

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Since Directive 2001-18, Europe has undoubtedly been the continent with the most stringent legislation on plant biotechnologies, which has delayed the latter's development, while at the same time they have grown exponentially worldwide (as an indicator, in 2017, ISAAA covered over 189 million hectares worldwide).

A new hope has dawned for Europe with the development of NBTs (New BioTechnologies), in particular Crispr-Cas 9. This new technology, developed in 2012 has led to a great number of improvements, including increasing the accuracy of intervention on the genome.

It is recognized as being more accurate, faster, and very importantly, cheaper than conventional genome editing techniques. This gives another chance to small European biotechnology organizations that now have an opportunity to catch up It will be difficult for Europe to say that it is engaged in precision agriculture without also encouraging NBTs

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