

EU food-testing labs must track unapproved CRISPR crop imports—but there's no easy way to do it

A landmark European court ruling that made gene-edited crops subject to the same stringent regulations as other genetically modified organisms (GMOs) has created a conundrum for food-testing laboratories across Europe.

The [ruling that the Court of Justice of the European Union \(ECJ\) delivered](#) on 25 July 2018 requires these scattered laboratories — which already spot-check for foods that contain unapproved GMOs — to look for gene-edited crops. But there is no easy way to do this. Gene edits often alter just a few DNA letters, whereas conventional genetic modifications often involve transplanting longer stretches of DNA from one species to another.

“Some of these [gene-editing] alterations are small enough that they are simply indistinguishable from naturally occurring organisms,” says Martin Wasmer at the Leibniz University Hannover, Germany

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[F]ew EU labs tasked with enforcement of regulations on genetically modified crops currently have the money, expertise or equipment to carry out [the appropriate tests], says Hermann Broll, a researcher in the Department of Food Safety at the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment in Berlin.

And even if they could find the edits, he says, regulators would still struggle to prove that the DNA variant they've identified is the result of gene editing, rather than a natural mutation.

Read full, original article: [CRISPR conundrum: Strict European court ruling leaves food-testing labs without a plan](#)