

CRISPR-edited foods could hit grocery stores in Japan by late 2019

Genetically modified food products using a specific kind of technology may hit store shelves in Japan within this year amid lingering consumer concerns, after a notification system for such food began [in October].

The gene-editing technology allows a specific gene in the DNA to be precisely clipped out to stop its functions, and sometimes a gene from a different organism is inserted.

The technology dramatically speeds up improvements to plants and animals, something that has conventionally been conducted through breeding.

Critics are concerned because some of the gene-edited food products do not need to be screened for safety.

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The health ministry says it is mandatory to put genetically modified food through safety screenings under the Food Sanitation Law.

But food using the technique only to clip out genes is treated as an exception under the notification system. Developers are asked to notify the government of such food products, but it is not obligatory.