

Video: House of Lords member and science writer Matt Ridely urges UK to 'break free' of Europe's restrictive CRISPR crop rules

The UK must break away from Europe's restrictive agricultural gene-editing rules, [science writer Matt Ridley](#) told the UK's House of Lords on January 30. A vocal advocate for technological innovation, Ridely argued that Britain should embrace CRISPR and other new breeding techniques, or risk falling behind enterprising nations, including the US, Canada and Argentina, that have recognized the technology's benefits.

While critics warn that gene-edited crops and animals could pose a risk to human health and the environment, Ridely countered that no data support such concerns and offered several examples of how Britain stands to gain by taking an evidence-based position on CRISPR:

There is no clearer case of a technology in which we could and should take the lead, but in which we are and will be held back if we do not break free from the EU approach. That would not be a race to the bottom but the very opposite: a race to the top.

For example, if we allowed the genome-edited blight-resistant potatoes developed at the Sainsbury Laboratory to be grown here in the UK, we would be able to greatly reduce the spraying of fungicides on potato fields, which happens up to 15 times a year, harming biodiversity and causing lots of emissions from tractors. That would be an improvement, not a regression, in environmental terms.

[Original video](#)