

## Viewpoint: Europe can't produce enough food if it cuts use of farm chemicals but opposes gene editing

Europe is asking its farmers to use fewer pesticides and less fertilizer, while still producing the same amount of food.

If European governments were willing to adopt the latest agricultural innovations, like gene editing and precision ag, reaching such a goal might be possible.

In late July, researchers from 132 scientific institutions published an open letter about the importance of genome editing — a process used to insert or delete genes from a plant's DNA. The scientists urged the European Commission to permit the use of gene editing for agricultural crops.

If that doesn't happen, European farmers will continue to fall behind the rest of the world, they said.

"Genome editing offers an increasing range of solutions... for crops that are climate resilient, less dependent from fertilizers and pesticides and help preserve natural resources," the researchers wrote. "We recommend that the European Commission endorses this message for the benefit and welfare of all EU citizens."

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In May, the EU unveiled its Farm to Fork strategy, which sets out ambitious targets for 2030:

- A 50 percent reduction in agricultural pesticides
- A 20 percent cut in fertilizer use
- Twenty-five percent of farmland will be organic

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