

## CRISPR, forests and climate change: Gene editing poised to engineer faster growing, carbon sucking trees—if activists don't block it

For years, scientists have recommended planting more trees to fight climate change. With more trees, the rate of photosynthesis will be more and will help in reducing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Apart from that as the mechanism produces oxygen and converts carbon into biomass, it will lead to a reduction in temperature. The carbon will be stored in leaves, trunks and soil, increasing natural carbon reserve called carbon sink.

The idea of planting more trees is great but it has some limitations. A fully grown tree produces around 260 pounds of oxygen each year and removes 48 pounds of carbon dioxide. But to get to that point, it takes years. Hence, scientists believe plant DNA can be altered for it to grow faster, bigger apart from making it resistant to diseases.

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However, many scientists are against the idea as gene edits always don't necessarily produce expected outcomes... Lucy Sharratt, a co-ordinator of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, is one of the scientists against genetic manipulation. Her organization raises awareness about issues in genetic engineering in food and farming. "If we start genetically engineering more plants and animals, algae and trees, where is this leading, this remaking of organisms, because we cannot as human societies reorganize ourselves to stop the destruction of biodiversity," Sharratt said.

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