

## Will Biden Administration preserve Trump USDA's science-based crop biotechnology rules?

"Listen to the science" was an oft-heard riposte in political debates about how the government should respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. While Donald Trump's administration failed on that front, it did "listen to the science" last May, when the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) streamlined some of its outdated and scientifically unwarranted regulations of modern biotech crops. Will President Joe Biden stay the course?

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Under the new rules, plant breeders are no longer required to submit their products to the USDA to determine whether they qualify for an exemption. As the preamble to the rule notes, this change reduces "the regulatory burden for developers of organisms that are unlikely to pose plant pest risks" and "provides a clear, predictable, and efficient regulatory pathway for innovators" to develop improved biotech plants.

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Anti-biotech groups immediately decried the modernized rules. "Under the newly released regulations, the overwhelming majority of genetically engineered (GE) plant trials would not have to be reported to USDA, or have their risks analyzed before being allowed to go to market," declared a press release from the Center for Food Safety.

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Will the Biden administration listen to the science regarding biotech crops? One possibly good omen is the nomination of biotech-friendly Obama administration Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to his former post.

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