

EU should speed its adoption of CRISPR crops to keep up with global competition, officials say

Using genome editing technologies in plants could help the EU ensure food security and reduce the impact of current agriculture practice on the climate, according to new report by the European Group on Ethics in science and new technologies (EGE).

Allowing gene editing for precision breeding would help the EU achieve goals stated in its Farm to Fork strategy, of reducing use of fertilizers by 30 per cent and turning 25% of agricultural land over to organic farming by 2030.

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"There is a need to ensure food security, provide renewable resources for fuel, feed and fiber, safeguard the retention of biodiversity and protect the environment," the report says. "Current forms of agriculture contribute significantly to the anthropogenic climate crisis."

The ethicists also call for broader and more inclusive societal debate on genome editing, for better monitoring of regulatory and scientific developments in the field, and moves to establish a system of global governance of gene editing technologies.

EGE looked at the impact of gene editing in humans, animals and plants, concluding that in agriculture, the EU should speed up its adoption for plant breeding, to keep up with international competition and support food production.

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