

Viewpoint: Anti-biotechnology groups lining up against proposal that USDA take over regulation of genetically engineered animals, claiming ‘unknown dangers’

A potential shift in regulatory authority and oversight from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to the USDA over genetically modified animals could dramatically change the industry.

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The proposed changes cover a wide scope of regulatory framework and safety review process for “amenable species,” which ranges from cattle, horses and sheep to catfish, geese, ducks, pigeons and swine and the regulation of biotechnology. That includes how the USDA should define “off-target changes” for the “purpose of expedited review of animals” in certain cases and what kind of genetic modification, entities or activities should be given exemptions from regulations. It is regulatory framework the [USDA calls](#) more “flexible” for the regulation of certain animals modified or developed using genetic engineering.

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Many in the natural food industry and environmental groups say more caution should be given before allowing more genetically engineered animals into the marketplace.

“GMOs are a gateway technology through which other far more powerful technologies are going to go through the portal,” says Loren Israelsen, founder and president of United Natural Products Alliance. “When you get into synthetic biology and a lot more sophisticated technologies, it’s a one-way go, and if you pull the trigger, you can’t pull it back.”

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