

In ‘urgent plea’ for organic farming to allow biotechnology, researchers say Europe’s Farm to Fork program ‘will likely fail’ without it

An international research team, including scientists from Wageningen University & Research [WUR] in the Netherlands, says that unless the EU allows novel breeding techniques such as gene editing in organic agriculture, Europe’s Farm to Fork strategy will likely fail to deliver on its promise of moving towards realizing the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]. In a [paper published in Trends in Plant Science](#), the authors make an urgent plea for unification of these two farming methods, saying that organic farming and modern biotechnology both have their specific strengths in contributing to the SDGs — combining both approaches could unleash important synergies.

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“This is especially true for gene editing, a new precision tool used in plant breeding,” says Richard Visser, professor of Plant Breeding at WUR. “Gene editing offers unique opportunities to make food production more sustainable and to further improve the quality, but also the safety, of food especially in those crops that are cross pollinated and/or vegetatively propagated. With the help of these new molecular tools, more robust plants can be developed that deliver high yields for high-quality nutrition, even with less fertilizers.”

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The authors expect that implementation of legal change is unlikely under current political realities. “Many EU and national policymakers and interest groups seem to prefer co-existence policies, where organic production and modern biotechnology are strictly separated,” says Wesseler.

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