

## In Brexit unwind, England will break this month from restrictive EU gene-edited crop rules, clearing pathway for CRISPR produce and livestock

When Boris Johnson became prime minister of the United Kingdom in 2019, he pledged to “liberate the U.K.’s extraordinary bioscience sector from anti-genetic modification rules.” The country had to hew to strict European biotech regulations until it finalized its divorce from the European Union in January.

[This month,] the government is widely expected to follow through on Johnson’s promise by making it easier to test and commercialize some genetically engineered crops and livestock.

The decision, which will be announced by [June 17], applies to plants and animals whose genes have been edited with precision techniques such as CRISPR. It will put the United Kingdom in line with several countries including the United States, and U.K. biotechnologists say it will speed research and stimulate investment.

“Much as I have to swallow hard and say it through gritted teeth, Brexit has at least one dividend,” says Jonathan Jones, a plant biologist at the Sainsbury Laboratory.

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The government decision on gene editing, which will come from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), will not apply outside England. Other parts of the United Kingdom—Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland—regulate GMOs themselves and are skeptical of their value.

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