

Kenya is emerging as a major hub of CRISPR biomedical research in Africa

Kenyan scientist Dr Hussein Abkallo wound up in the sophisticated world of Crispr Cas9 almost by chance, unaware that the decision would catapult him to the forefront of genetic engineering in the African continent.

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This technology enables geneticists and medical researchers to edit parts of the genome by removing, silencing or otherwise altering sections of the DNA sequence.

Kenya is ahead of many other African countries in this novel area of biotechnology, with a number of gene editing projects currently underway. The country has begun drafting guidelines to regulate gene-edited products, applying procedures that have been formulated in Argentina.

So, just how is Crispr being used in the continent?

“The technology has many applications, such as in the development of vaccines as we do,” Hussein says of his projects at [the International Livestock Research Institute]. “Other teams elsewhere are using Crispr in agriculture, such as in developing disease resistance in crops. Other projects focus on generating drought resilience in crops. A lot can be achieved with the technology, as long as one understands the genetic traits that one wants to improve.”

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