

Canada establishes path toward likely approval of CRISPR crops and other forms of agricultural gene editing

In Spring 2021, Health Canada released proposed new guidance for the Novel Food Regulations, specifically focused on plant breeding, and conducted an open consultation seeking feedback from both industry stakeholders and general Canadian public. This move reflects the government's intent to establish a predictable commercialization pathway in preparation for new products that are developed using new plant breeding techniques, more specifically, "gene editing" (GE) techniques.

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We recommend the following actions to ensure that GE can be available to Canadian public crop breeders.

First, the legal issues surrounding CRISPR/Cas9 need to be clarified. Doing so could serve as precedent for other GE techniques and technologies.

Second, more research (and therefore, more funding) is needed to understand the function of genes in relation to traits (functional genomics). This deficit in knowledge is a serious constraint to using GE in the public crop breeding sector, particularly because many of the crops under development have complex genomes that are understudied.

Lastly, Canadian public crop breeders signal that they would benefit from greater insight into Canadian and foreign buyer's perceptions and willingness to accept of GE products.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the full post here.**](#)