

## Consumers in Germany are open to buying CRISPR gene edited tomatoes, new study shows

The CRISPR gene-editing (GE) breeding method is used to increase the resilience of high-yielding tomato cultivars against pests and diseases, reducing crop protection requirements. This study investigated consumers' willingness to buy CRISPR GE tomatoes in a repeated discrete-choice experiment.

The researchers observed a strong positive effect of providing information on the CRISPR breeding technology, while the sensory experience of the CRISPR GE tomatoes in a visit to a greenhouse had a rather weak, predominantly negative effect on the participants' willingness to buy CRISPR GE tomatoes. The researchers found that roughly half of the 32 participants demonstrated constant CRISPR GE tomato choices during the experiments, and these participants were mainly employed as scientists. However, the rest of the participants changed their CRISPR GE tomato choices, with the majority showing an increase in their willingness to buy CRISPR GE tomatoes; these "changers" were dominated by non-scientists.

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Science communication on CRISPR GE breeding technology should target people with little knowledge about the technology, and consumers of organic tomatoes seem to have more specified, stable preferences regarding the technology. Further, scientific information about the CRISPR GE methodology should preferentially be provided when new technology and information about it are not yet widespread and people have not yet formed a strong opinion about the technology.

"To summarize, CRISPR GE tomatoes were widely chosen throughout the choice experiments with its 16 choice sets. In particular, 25 out of the 32 participants chose a CRISPR GE tomato package at least once. This result confirms the positive attitude, trust, and perceived benefits stated by the majority of the respondents towards GE foods in the questionnaire. The CRISPR GE tomato choice pattern observed in each experiment suggests that the reduced pesticide amounts in the CRISPR GE tomatoes induced more participants to choose CRISPR GE tomatoes, and thus this is valued higher by consumers than a lower price", the researchers conclude.

"We recognize that about half of the respondents changed their CRISPR GE choices during the experiments. In particular, an additional 17 CRISPR GE tomato packages were chosen in the fourth experiment compared to the first experiment, arising from 13 respondents increasing and 4 respondents decreasing their CRISPR GE tomato choices. The increased willingness to buy CRISPR GE tomatoes revealed in the choice experiments is not in line with the constant level of willingness to buy genetically engineered foods as stated in the questionnaire filled in during the first and the fourth experiment. We assume that the willingness to buy that was indirectly identified in the choice experiment better reflects consumers' actual preferences than a willingness to buy directly identified through self-assessment in the questionnaire."

[Read the original post here.](#)