

India likely to see drought-resistant CRISPR gene-edited rice by 2026

A drought-resistant rice variety developed through the application of genome-edited technology for the first time in [India], and is expected to be available for field evaluation by [fall] 2024 and for commercial cultivation by farmers by 2026, agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar has said.

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"New variety of rice is expected to improve water use efficiency in paddy cultivation and help farmers in taking up the crops despite rainfall deficiency," KC Bansal, secretary, National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, told FE.

This is expected to be the first variety of agricultural crops developed using genome-edited technology to go for commercial release in the next four years in the country.

The government in March had exempted certain types of genome-edited crops from the stringent bio-safety regulations applicable to genetically-modified (GM) crops to ensure wider use of this technology and accelerate genetic improvement of crops in the country.

There are several crops being developed through using genome-edited technology that are in the pipeline for field trials.

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Scientists associated with the Indian Council for Agricultural Research said the technology has great promise and emphasis is needed on improving oilseed and pulse crop varieties resistant to diseases, insects or pests, and tolerant to drought, salinity and heat stresses.

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