

## Onslaught of droughts and war soften EU opposition to crop gene editing

When GMO technology first arrived in Europe in the 2000s it met fierce opposition in a region that prides itself on the quality and provenance of its food. Products were labelled “frankenfoods” and trial fields were attacked by protesters. Regulators tightened rules so much that only one type of genetically modified wheat has ever been grown in the EU (although dozens of crops are now authorised for imports, mostly for animal feed).

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Now, the mood on gene editing in Europe is shifting. In September, agriculture ministers from the 27 member states urged Brussels to speed up a re-examination of GMO regulation. The following month, the European Commission confirmed that it would issue a proposal to ease regulation for some gene-editing technologies (opens a new window) in the second quarter of 2023.

The moves come during a year in which widespread drought cut harvests across Europe, with Spain losing half its olive crop. The war in Ukraine has reduced exports from a country dubbed the bread basket of Europe. The drought and conflict, combined with high energy costs, have driven up food prices and caused shortages in the developing world.

“The situation has changed. We have to be able to produce a sufficient supply of food. We need to take advantage of technology to adapt to climate change and maintain biodiversity,” says Pekka Pesonen, secretary-general of Copa-Cogeca, the EU farmers’ union.

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