

India poised for U-turn: Country trades organic-only farm solutions for CRISPR gene editing

The Pinarayi Vijayan government seems to have taken a U-turn on its policy on genetic modification of crop seeds, with a reference report of the state planning board for government departments saying it is time to embrace new applications like gene editing in plant breeding. It also calls for restricting organic farming, which the state has been actively promoting, to niche products.

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“Advanced research in plant breeding should help us to develop varieties and hybrids that systemically require less application of chemicals. New applications in cutting-edge areas of research, such as biotechnology, gene editing (CRISPR) and nanotechnology, promise not just to reduce the use of chemicals but also make available high yielding crop varieties resistant to viral diseases, acidity, alkalinity, salinity, flooding and high temperature. The state’s agricultural research system needs to be geared up to meet this challenge,” says a portion of [the Kerala Development Report] on agriculture and allied activities.

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On organic farming, the planning board report says: “While the practice of organic farming can be popularised in niche spheres where premium export prices are available, this cannot be a generalised policy for the state. It might lock the state’s agriculture into a low yield-low income cycle, leading to more unscientific and irrational uses of land in the long term.”

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