Viewpoint: ‘Science is evolving, and times have changed’ — Foodie France slowly opening doors to ecology-promoting gene-edited crops

Science is evolving, and times have changed. “Life is constantly mutating. Every year there are 240 million mutations in a hectare of wheat and no one worries about it,” sighs François Parcy, molecular geneticist and research director at the [French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, or] CNRS. So why be afraid of a single mutation that we will create in the laboratory, in a controlled manner?

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Recognized by European Commission experts as one of the best ways to reduce the use of pesticides, [new-breeding techniques, like CRISPR gene-editing] promise to reduce, perhaps significantly, the impact of agriculture on biodiversity and the climate.

…

“Today, only around fifteen plants provide 70% of our caloric intake,” [Parcy] says. “Many varieties that have nourished us throughout history have been forgotten. And we have only kept those that suited us best. But these plants were selected according to the requirements of yesterday. They are not very resilient, and greedy in inputs. We must diversify, and re-domesticate species according to the criteria of our time, he pleads. And thanks to NBTs, we won’t take 3,000 years, but between six months and ten years to do it.”

[Editor’s Note: This article has been translated from French and edited for clarity.]

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