

CRISPR gene-editing technology heralds first generation of climate change resistant crops

CRISPR gene editing technology is beginning to deliver on a promise to quickly create crops with traits that withstand a changing climate, resist aggressive pests and reinvigorate healthy soils, according to experts at the South by Southwest event in Austin [in March.]

Companies exploring CRISPR to make climate-friendly foods and medicines are enjoying some tailwinds:

- In February, the [European Parliament voted](#) to loosen restrictions on certain crops made with the technique.
- In 2023, the first [CRISPR-edited salad greens](#) and [Sickle Cell therapies reached U.S. markets](#).
- Nearly two dozen CRISPR startups are advancing crops that use resources efficiently and resist pests better than traditional ones. These include Pairwise, with \$114 million in funding, the [Andreessen Horowitz-backed SciFi Foods](#), tomato-breeder [Sanatech Seed](#) and crop-protection startup [Aragene](#).

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At the same time, startups and researchers are taking on investment partnerships with larger organizations to commercialize CRISPR innovations. Bayer has a project with Pairwise to create a corn crop that is more resilient to environmental factors. In 2011, The Gates Foundation gave a \$10.3 million grant to the [International Rice Research Institute \(IRRI\)](#) and has re-invested more than [\\$16 million to the organization in 2023](#) to create climate resistant rice varieties.

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