Conscious Greens: Bayer and Pairwise team up to market first CRISPR food in North America, gene edited lettuce

Twelve months ago, Pairwise, a gene-editing company based in North Carolina, launched its first commercial product in the United States under the Conscious Greens brand. Despite widespread hesitancy, if not downright hostility, to genetically modified (GM) foods, Pairwise hoped that the more nuanced genetic modifications enabled by CRISPR and other gene editing technologies would prove more palatable to U.S. consumers. The first Pairwise product was mustard greens that were edited to remove a wasabi-like bitterness that should boost their appeal.

â??We know from research that most consumers in the U.S. donâ??t know much about CRISPR or gene editing but, when they learn about it, most feel positive. Especially if they can see the direct, tangible benefits to them,â?• Tom Adams, PhD, CEO of Pairwise told GEN recently.

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He continued, â??We introduced the first CRISPR food in North America, and the product was a success among consumers and chefs. Now that weâ??ve achieved several important milestones and laid the commercial groundwork, this new licensing agreement with Bayer is the next phase in commercialization.â?•

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But while challenges remain, there are signs that gene-edited foods are being regarded by the public in a different light to prior modified foods. â??Itâ??s heartening to see that the first few genome-edited products hitting the market are specifically focused on consumer-preferred traits,â?• [Melinda] Kliegman said.

â??While some of these traits may seem frivolous, they are paving the way for a wide range of traits that could help us better adapt to climate change, reduce emissions from agriculture, and provide food security to the several billion more people that will soon join us on this planet. It may also help us save our chocolate, lemons, and bananas.â?•

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