

BSPB welcomes Defra gene editing consultation as a boost for plant breeding, farming and the environment

The British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB) welcomes the publication today of a Defra consultation which could give Britain's scientists and breeders access to the latest gene editing techniques and mark a step change in prospects for crop improvement to support more sustainable, productive and climate resilient agriculture.

The consultation paves the way for the Government to reverse restrictive EU rules classifying gene edited products as GMOs, a move which has attracted widespread support from across the scientific, farming, plant breeding, food processing and international development sectors.

It would also re-align our rules with the regulatory stance of other countries around the world whose scientists, breeders, farmers and consumers are already benefiting from access to these valuable precision breeding technologies.

"Using advanced gene editing techniques, which mimic those that occur naturally, can improve the speed and precision of crop breeding, opening up significant opportunities to keep pace with demands for increased agricultural productivity, resource-use efficiency, more durable pest and disease resistance, improved nutrition and resilience to climate change," explains BSPB chief executive Samantha Brooke.

"We support decisive Government action on this issue, in line with the Prime Minister's post-Brexit pledge to liberate our biosciences sector. The proposals set out in the consultation will benefit plant breeders large and small, in both public and private sectors, and will open up exciting new opportunities for crop improvement across a wide range of species and characteristics."

"A change in regulation for gene edited technologies will also promote research investment and new opportunities for international R&D collaboration, by demonstrating that we are open for business and keen to support more innovation-based policies.

This consultation demonstrates positive opportunities for our sector through better, more proportionate regulation of genetic innovation."

"BSPB and its member companies look forward to contributing actively to the Defra consultation," concludes Ms Brooke.

About BSPB

The British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB) is the representative body for the UK plant breeding industry. Acting on members' behalf, BSPB licenses, collects and distributes certified seed royalties and farm-saved seed payments on agricultural and horticultural crops. The Society represents members' interests on technical, regulatory and intellectual property matters, and works to promote continued innovation and investment in UK plant breeding.

Contact

Samantha Brooke, BSPB
Email: samantha.brooke@bspb.co.uk
Tel: 01353 653201
Mob: 07793 588157