Gene-Edited Oil is Being Used in Restaurants

The CEO of agriculture company Calyxt has confirmed that their gene-edited soybean oil is currently at use at locations in the Midwest. Although he was unable to name the locations using the product for competitive reasons, this marks the first appearance of a gene-edited food in restaurants. Unlike GMOs, gene-edited plants do not contain genetic material. The editing is applied only to the plant's own DNA, altering or adding already present traits. The soybean oil now being used in restaurants has been edited to have a longer shelf life and contain no trans fats.

No Label, No Warning, No Problem…?

As a consumer, the arrival of gene-edited foods leaves something to be desired. For one thing, the company isn't releasing where these oils are being used. For those who are concious of what they're eating, that's an issue.

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Gene-edited foods are also exempt from labeling. Since the changes to the plant could potentially happen through traditional breeding methods, the U.S. regulatory agencies does not consider the product to be genetically engineered. Compnaies are not required to report anything to the Food and Drug Administration, although they can request an evaluation. **has Calyxt?**

This attitude contrasts with the European Union's take on gene-edited foods. Last year, the Court of Justice in the European Union ruled that gene-edited crops will be subjected to the same regulations as GMOs. There is language allowing for exemptions, but those have conditions, according to the

court. Only plants that have “conventionally been used in a number of applications and have a long safety record are exempt from those obligations.” This is a much more decisive stance than that of the U.S. government, which is exercising little to no oversight.

Market Players

Depending on the poll, the percentage of American people in favor of GMO labeling is anywhere from 89 to 96. The number of countries banning or heavily regulating those products is growing. What we think of when we think genetically modified food is becoming more expensive to bring to market and there is much less demand for it. Major companies are looking for another advantage, and genetically engineered plants allow them to use many of the same resources at their disposal with fewer regulatory hassles and less consumer knowledge.

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Calyxt is the first company to get gene-edited crops into restaurants, but it will not be the last. Syngenta, an agribusiness giant and producer of GM seeds, has plans to have genetically engineered products on the market in the next decade. The ChemChina owned corporation is also planning to expand into tomatoes, rice, and sunflowers. Arcadia Biosciences, another biotech firm based in Davis, CA, is also developing genetically engineered foods. Bayer (formerly Monsanto) is also getting into action, partnering with Pairwise, a gene-editing company based in North Carolina.

Business Friendly

The U.S. government has not tried to check the speed at which companies have been able to develop and implement genetically engineered foods. Once again, they are choosing big business over truly examining a new food technology with the potential

to seriously damage our health and the environment.

Sources:

- *Gene-edited Food Quietly Arrives in Restaurant Cooking Oil* – AP News
- *Restaurant in the midwest is first in the US to use gene-edited food* – Earth.com
- *Gene-Edited Foods Are Coming to Your Plate But Aren't Being Regulated* – Bloomberg
- *CRISPR plants now subject to tough GM laws in European Union* – Nature.com