

NewsLetter

Why the need for new Regulations?

The move to separate precision breeding from Genetic Modification has arisen following advice from the UK's Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment as well as from other bodies such as the European Food Safety Authority, that it is the characteristics of organisms that determine risk and not the technology used to produce them.

They concluded that precision bred organisms present no greater risk to health or the environment than traditionally bred counterparts.

The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes reached the same conclusion, stating that there is no evidence that precision bred organisms are intrinsically more hazardous than traditionally bred organisms.

What will the new Regulations require?

The Regulations are made under the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023 and once in force will require:

- Prior notification to Defra of the deliberate release of precision bred plants into the environment for non-marketing purposes, such as for field trials.
- Application to Defra for a precision bred assessment and confirmation to enable precision bred plants to be marketed, such as for commercial cultivation.
- Application to the FSA a food and feed marketing authorisation to allow food and feed produced from confirmed precision bred plants to be placed on the market.
- Public registers to be established
- An inspection and enforcement regime for Local Authorities to secure compliance with the legislation, including civil sanctions by way of enforcement notices, namely compliance notices, stop notices and monetary penalty notices.

Guidance will be published by the FSA in due course.



Precision Breeding Draft Regulations published

The Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Regulations 2025 have been published in draft form and are expected to become law in England in approximately six months' time.

"Precision breeding" refers to the alteration of DNA in a plant or animal, using techniques such as gene editing, to make changes that could also be achieved by traditional breeding methods.

This is different from Genetic Modification which involves the insertion of "foreign" DNA into a plant or animal to achieve an end result that is not possible using traditional breeding techniques.

Currently both techniques are governed by the same GMO legislation, but the new legislation will regulate the placing on the market of precision bred plant products only in England.