

CRISPR/Cas: Nobel Prize potentially opens up 'Pandora's Box'

Testbiotech warns against hype around genetic engineering technology

7 October 2020 / The inventors of the CRISPR/Cas "gene-scissor" technology have been awarded the Nobel Prize. Christoph Then from Testbiotech comments as follows: "This is a Nobel Prize that could potentially open up 'Pandora's Box'. The future of our earth now depends substantially on whether we will be able to set clear and strict limits to this new genetic engineering technology. We must protect human, plant and animal genomes from becoming an object of technological hubris and financial gain."

The use of gene editing tools, such as the "gene-scissors" CRISPR, allows new ways of genome manipulation. They make it possible to edit the genome by removing or changing natural genes as well as introducing artificial DNA. Testbiotech is strongly warning against the uncontrolled release of these genetically engineered organisms into the environment, as well as an increasing number of patents on plants and animals in this field. Testbiotech is further concerned about experts and companies emphasising the economic expectations, and who are, at the same time, demanding that mandatory risk assessment for new genetic engineering technology (New GE) is abandoned.

New GE has a huge range of potential applications in agriculture and the environment, not only for crop plants and livestock, but also for natural biodiversity, such as insects, wild animals, trees and grasses. Just recently, Testbiotech published a report on how New GE is putting nature conservation at risk. CRISPR technology is also crucial for the development of so-called gene drives that are meant to eradicate or exchange whole populations of wild species. In effect, these are plans to intervene in the "germline" of biodiversity. Testbiotech is moreover concerned about the increasing number of animals used in experiments involving CRISPR/Cas technology.

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Further information: [Report on New GE and nature conservation](#) [2]

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