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Limagrain secures global genome editing license from Qi Biodesign to accelerate next-generation crop breeding

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Partnership gives French seed giant access to advanced CRISPR technologies as Europe moves toward a new regulatory framework for genomic breeding

French seed company Limagrain has signed a worldwide licensing agreement with Chinese genome-editing specialist Qi Biodesign to access a portfolio of advanced genome-editing technologies, strengthening its efforts to develop the next generation of field and vegetable crop varieties. The agreement marks a strategic step in Limagrain's long-term innovation roadmap as the company expands beyond conventional breeding into advanced genomic technologies capable of delivering crops with improved productivity, resilience and sustainability.

Under the partnership, Limagrain will gain immediate access to Qi Biodesign's proprietary portfolio of genome-editing tools, including a novel CRISPR nuclease designed to complement first-generation genome-editing systems. The agreement also establishes a framework through which Limagrain can leverage future innovations emerging from Qi Biodesign's research pipeline. Rather than relying on a single editing platform, the collaboration enables Limagrain to diversify its genome-editing capabilities, providing researchers with multiple tools tailored to different crops, traits and breeding objectives.

The partnership comes as genome editing gains momentum as one of the most transformative technologies in modern plant breeding. While conventional CRISPR systems have already demonstrated their value, breeders are increasingly seeking specialized editing platforms to tackle more complex genetic improvements involving disease resistance, climate resilience, resource-use efficiency and crop quality. The timing is also significant for the European seed industry. The agreement coincides with ongoing efforts by the European Union to modernize regulations governing New Genomic Techniques (NGTs),

a policy shift expected to expand opportunities for the commercial development of genome-edited crop varieties across the region.

By combining its elite germplasm and breeding expertise with Qi Biodesign's genome-editing technologies, Limagrain aims to accelerate the development of improved crop varieties capable of helping farmers respond to climate change, evolving pest and disease pressures, resource constraints and increasing sustainability requirements. Beyond access to technology, the collaboration also reflects the growing convergence between global seed companies and biotechnology innovators as advanced breeding increasingly depends on partnerships that combine genetics, molecular biology and precision genome engineering.

"The future of plant breeding will be driven by scientific excellence, technological diversity and strategic partnerships," said Sébastien Chauffaut, Chief Executive Officer of Limagrain and Chairman of the Scientific Committee. He said the agreement broadens Limagrain's access to complementary breeding technologies while strengthening its ability to develop improved crop varieties that address some of agriculture's most pressing global challenges.

Kevin Zhao, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder of Qi Biodesign, said the partnership represents an important milestone in expanding the application of the company's proprietary genome-editing technologies across global crop breeding programs. He added that combining Qi Biodesign's scientific innovations with Limagrain's expertise in crop genetics, breeding and international seed markets would accelerate the delivery of improved crop varieties supporting sustainable agriculture worldwide. The collaboration further strengthens Limagrain's position among leading global seed companies investing in next-generation breeding technologies while reinforcing Qi Biodesign's growing role as a provider of advanced genome-editing platforms for international agricultural research and commercial crop development.