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Rosneft Joins Russia's Gene-Editing Tech Program

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New gene-editing tools such as CRISPR/Cas9 have made it possible to rearrange the genetic code much more precisely and at lower costs than before. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Russia's oil giant Rosneft and the Russian government will join forces to develop gene-editing technology, according to a government decree published Wednesday.

The deal, which President Vladimir Putin ordered in December, aims to accelerate Russia's $1.6 billion program to create 30 new varieties of genetically modified crops and animals by 2027.

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Rosneft is tasked with helping Russia stimulate genetic research and lower its dependence on foreign technology, according to the decree signed by Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.

To that end, Rosneft is to establish an advisory body on genetic technology development

headed by CEO Igor Sechin. Additionally, the sides are expected to create a genetic technology and gene-editing research center to catalyze research in medicine and industry.

Russian researchers have welcomed the $1.6 billion gene-editing program, which appears to have exempted some gene-edited products from a 2016 law that banned genetically modified organisms.

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A Chinese scientist caused outrage in 2018 with a claim to have "gene-edited" babies, while a Russian biologist last year declared plans to modify the genomes of human embryos and implant them in women.

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