

The Washington Post

Letters to the Editor

Don't fear these mushrooms



Mushrooms grow on an aluminum shelf. (Adelma Gregory-Bunnell/The Cecil Whig via Associated Press)

April 29

The April 19 news article “[Gene-edited mushroom could soon be for sale](#)” [Politics & The Nation] was right that the scientific consensus on new breeding techniques shouldn’t cause public fear. Humans have been breeding plants since the dawn of plant domestication. The plant varieties developed using gene-editing technologies could, in most cases, be developed through classical breeding. We simply have the tools today to reach the same endpoint more accurately and precisely.

It was misleading to imply that this breeding technique skips federal oversight. Like this mushroom, all new plant varieties are regulated in the United States, and plant breeders have a phenomenal safety record. Varieties improved with the latest breeding methods, such as gene editing, are subjected to the same critical performance evaluations and processes that breeders have used for decades. The result is a wholesome and safe food supply.

We can’t afford to let unfounded fears stifle progress. Continued innovation is paramount to the future of agriculture and our quality of life. U.S. agriculture producers face the very real challenge of providing for a growing population so that future generations will have access to the same diverse, nutritious and high-quality food we enjoy today. Thanks to improved breeding methods, we can more efficiently meet these needs through agriculture practices that preserve our environment’s natural resources and biodiversity.

Andrew W. LaVigne, Alexandria

The writer is president and chief executive of the American Seed Trade Association.