

## **Stakeholder Engagement and Consumer Research in the Run-up to the Launch of Gene Edited Conscious™ Greens**

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### **Abstract**

It is widely acknowledged that the first generation of biotech crops largely offered direct benefits to growers and not directly to consumers. With the advent and application of gene editing there is the potential to see broader application to address more diverse traits and to improve specialty crops that did not benefit from earlier biotech tools. With wider application, there is the potential to deliver products with direct benefits to consumers, which could increase acceptance of the technology. The development of consumer-facing crops also offers new opportunities for public engagement and necessitates a commitment to transparency by developers.

In this talk, I will share early lessons learned from the roll out of Conscious™ Greens—one of the first gene edited products to be commercialized in the U.S. Conscious Greens are expected to be the first branded gene edited produce items in the U.S. when they hit supermarket shelves later this year. Our research indicates that new offerings in salad greens respond to a demand by pre-packaged salad consumers for more variety in the salad category. In addition, when the Conscious Greens team served salads made with gene edited greens to consumers in three key socially influential cities in 2022, there was no significant concern about the technology used to develop the greens. Rather, the focus of consumer response was delight for the product and the associated benefits to the consumer. I'll share our approach to stakeholder engagement and transparency as we take the product to market.

**Key words:** CRISPR, gene editing, consumer benefit, stakeholder engagement,