

abc is the umbrella group of the agricultural biotechnology industry in the UK. Our goal is to provide factual information about the agricultural use of GM technology in the UK.



## Tomato developed to increase resistance to cancer

*Nature Biotechnology* has revealed that tomatoes altered with genes from snapdragon flowers could be used to ward off cancer. Researchers at the John Innes Centre in Norwich created the crop of purple tomatoes. In tests mice that were prone to cancer lived almost a third longer if their diet was supplemented by the modified tomatoes. This clearly demonstrates the positive affect diet can have on health.

Genes from snapdragons that are responsible for the deep red pigment in the flower's petals due to an antioxidant called anthocyanin, which is also found in blueberries and blackberries, were inserted into tomato plants. The scientists created a crop so rich in anthocyanin that it turned purple as it ripened.

Professor Derek Burke, former chair of the UK's regulatory committee on GM, said: "This is a truly positive outcome from genetic modification of plants, and a real help to people wanting to improve their diets."

<http://www.nature.com/nbt/journal/vaop/ncurrent/abs/nbt.1506.html>

## Consumers buy GM foods when given the chance says EU sponsored report

In September 2003, EU Regulation 1829/2003(2) came into force requiring the labelling of GM derived ingredients in foodstuffs. A new study, entitled *Do European Consumers Buy GM Foods?* demonstrates that consumers buy GM-labelled products when presented with them in the familiar commercial environment of a supermarket or corner grocery store.

The study involved ten Member States – the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, The Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK – together with participation from organisations taking an EU-view both from a consumer and an industry perspective.

The report found that twenty per cent of consumers who bought GM-labelled products over a 12 month period were aware that they bought them. However, 48 per cent of people who bought GM labelled products thought that they had not bought them, indicating that some consumers either did not read the labels sufficiently closely, did not understand them or did not, in fact, care whether or not they bought GM-labelled products.

Professor Vivian Moses of Kings College London who coordinated the project said, "...This study reveals that, whatever people say in opinion polls, most do not actively avoid GM in the grocery stores, suggesting that they are not greatly concerned with the GM issue"

Welcoming the report abc Chairman, Dr Julian Little commented on the findings of the report which found GM products to generally be less expensive than non-GM equivalent products. He said, "GM products are often more affordable, and in the current economic climate UK farmers should have the opportunity to grow them and UK consumers should be afforded the opportunity to buy them if they so choose."

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/biohealth/research/nutritional/consumerchoice>

## Government Chief Scientist says science must reassure consumers over GM

Professor John Beddington, the Government's Chief Scientist, told the English Food and Farming Partnership's (EFFP) annual conference today, on Tuesday October 28, that work was currently underway to determine the role of biotechnology – including GM – in answering the challenge of global food security.

He said that proving the safety of biotechnology will be the key to convincing consumers of GM's benefits, but stressed that the debate must be based on a scientific evidence base rather than rhetoric: "We have to try to determine the evidence base. I think that when that evidence base is there the problems will change.

"We will have to ask difficult questions and we must be prepared to operate not in ignorance but based on what the science tells us."

<http://www.effp.com/x2349.xml>

## GM soya bean to contain healthy oils

Omega-3 fatty acids, commonly found in oily fish such as salmon and widely known for their health benefits in helping to fight cardiovascular disease, are now contained within a GM soya bean being developed by Monsanto. Direct benefits for human health could be on offer within four years due to the research being conducted by the University of South Dakota. This marks a dramatic change in the benefits offered by GM and could be key to changing public attitudes towards biotechnology.

The resultant GM soya oil has been found to increase the "omega-3 index" in the bloodstream from an average of four per cent to five per cent. William Harris, Professor of Medicine at the University of South Dakota, estimates that such a change could be associated with a drop in the risk of heart attacks by 50 per cent.

He said: "We saw these effects in our subjects after just a few weeks. I can imagine that, if you got this into the food supply and people were eating it year after year, you do have an opportunity to raise omega-3 levels in the blood."

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/science/article5068437.ece>



## NFU campaign 'Why Science Matters for Farming' calls for open debate on GM

The National Farmers' Union have published a campaign document calling for production and efficiency to be put at the top of the political agenda for agricultural research.

The launch of 'Why Science Matters for Farming' at the House of Commons was attended by NFU President Peter Kendall, Government Chief Scientist Professor John Beddington, David Kidney MP, chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Science and Technology in Agriculture and Professor Dianna Bowles, Chairman of the Centre for Novel Agricultural Products, University of York.

The campaign wants to see agriculture and horticulture recognised as high-tech industries that need science and research to allow them to deliver huge range of goods and services that society demands.

NFU chief science and regulatory affairs adviser Dr Helen Ferrier, author of the campaign report also said, "GM technologies are no longer new and we need to have a clear and open debate about their potential for making better plants that will have benefits to consumers and the environment. In the current climate of food shortages, growing world populations and the impacts of climate change on our ability to grow food, they have to remain one of the tools available to deliver solutions to these global challenges."

<http://www.whyfarmingmatters.co.uk/x393.xml>