

Welcome to the GM Observer – the newsletter of the Agricultural Biotechnology Council (abc). 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

OCTOBER 2008

Biotech cultivation figures increase across Europe

EuropaBio, the European biotech industry association, recently released figures on biotech crop cultivation in Europe, which showed that more EU farmers are choosing to go biotech to boost their competitiveness despite a 10 year moratorium on new product approvals.

The total area cultivated with biotech crops in the EU in 2008 was 107 719 hectares in seven countries, a 21% increase over 2007 (not including France). The cultivated acreage of biotech crops has increased over tenfold in Poland and Romania in 2008, doubled in Slovakia and increased substantially (68%) in the Czech Republic versus 2007. In Spain, where most of the EU's biotech crops are grown, the cultivated acreage continues to increase after 11 years of experience with the applied technology.

2008 marks the 10 year anniversary since the last biotech crop was approved for cultivation in the EU.

<http://www.europabio.org/documents/2008%20Cultivation%20chart.pdf>

More than 50% of consumers think GM could help feed a growing world population.

IGD survey shows increased consumer recognition of the benefits of GM

According to a recent survey by the IGD into consumer attitudes towards GM, the view is widespread that GM could help to improve output and feed a growing world population. In fact, just over one in two agreed with this view compared with just over one in ten (13%) who disagreed. Likewise, almost 50% of consumers also felt that GM could help to protect crops against disease and extreme weather.

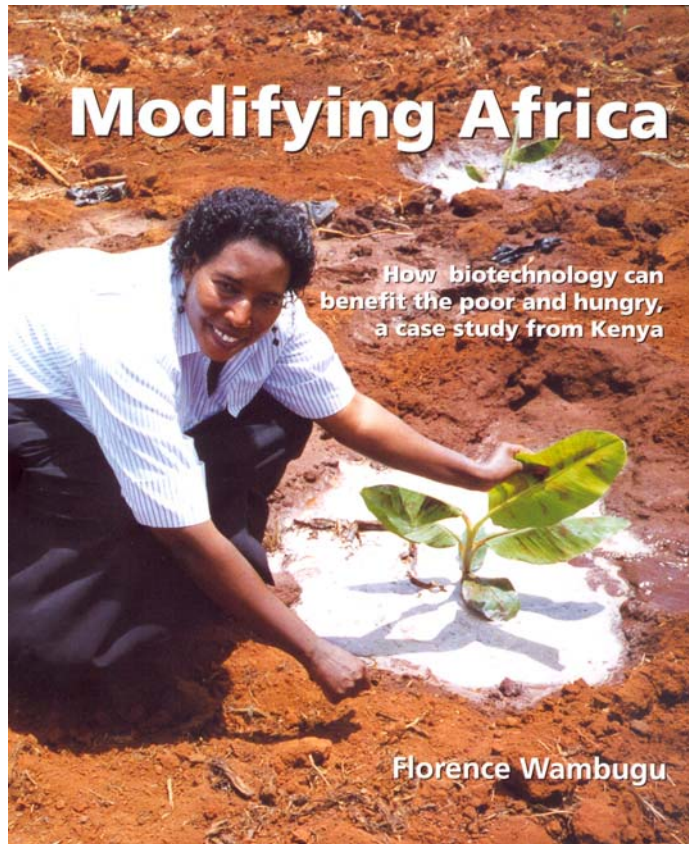
Politicians and scientists hit back at Prince Charles claims

Following unfounded claims by Prince Charles that GM crops could cause an environmental disaster, political figures and scientists spoke out in support of science. Former Defra minister, Phil Woolas, said it was up to Prince Charles and the other anti-GM campaigners to prove it was unsafe, and that it was the role of responsible governments to re-open the debate on GM, especially in light of food shortages around the world.

Leading scientists also mounted an attack, including Professor Alison Smith, senior researcher at the John Innes Centre, Europe's premier plant science laboratory, who said: "He could bring together our world-class scientists and agricultural experts to catalyse constructive debate and action that would benefit the UK and the rest of the planet.

"Instead, he indulges in diatribes in which he appears to blame the problems of the planet on a single technological advance that he has completely misunderstood."





"Biotechnology enables us to grow more with what we have at a cost we can afford to pay."



Drought resistant technology to help African subsistence farmers

Canadian company Performance Plants Inc. has announced a partnership with the Africa Harvest Biotech Foundation, in which drought-tolerant white maize will be developed and field tested for use by subsistence farmers.

The technology works by genetically enabling food plants to protect themselves against drought at an earlier stage. In standard North American crops such as corn, canola and soybeans, yield has been increased by up to 25 percent.

This is the first time Canadian agricultural biotech intellectual property is being transferred to Africa for non-commercial purposes. Dr. Florence Wambugu, a leading proponent of change in modern African agricultural science, and founder of Africa Harvest Biotech Foundation said, "The Green Revolution of the 20th century did little for African agriculture. Biotechnology, by putting African solutions into African seeds, enables us to grow more with what we have at a cost we can afford to pay."

http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_7658000/7658373.stm

GM at the London Science Museum

Beginning mid-November, the Science Museum will be unveiling a new exhibit on farming at the Antenna Gallery, which will include a section on GM foods. www.sciencemuseum.org.uk