



AGRICULTURAL  
BIOTECHNOLOGY  
COUNCIL

# GM Observer

News about farming and GM in the United Kingdom

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

## PM calls for new farming revolution to tackle the international food crisis

Prime Minister Gordon Brown has held a Downing Street Food Summit with the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, development charities, and other farming representatives, including Dr Mike Bushell from Syngenta, to discuss the need to provide coordinated action to tackle the world food crisis. Spiralling commodity prices have seen food riots across the developing world, and the World Food Programme requested millions of dollars of extra funding merely to maintain its current operations.

In his call for a new agricultural revolution to help poor farmers and to explore the links between climate change and food, Brown called for the international community to take the initiative to further develop higher yielding and climate resilient varieties of crops.

abc, the industry group for agricultural biotechnology, welcomed the Prime Minister's comments, especially the need to address the challenge of rising food prices through greater openness to science and technology.

## UK livestock organisations call for approval for GM feed

The British Pig Executive and the National Beef Association (NBA) have called on the EU to speed up its approvals process for GM crops and to reconsider its zero-tolerance policy on imported GM feed.

Concerned about spiralling feed costs and the prospect of declining domestic animal production, NBA chairman Duff Burrell said:

*"Full use of modern technology is essential if more farmers are to be able to grow more food crops on the increasingly limited area of agricultural land that is available. Rapid food price inflation is already alarming government and consumers, and production of both cereals and meat will reduce as shop prices reach toe-curling levels unless GM aids become part of UK and EU farming's routine tool kit."*

## All Party Group established to look at science and technology in agriculture

On the 11<sup>th</sup> March, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Science and Technology in Agriculture, held its inaugural meeting chaired by Labour MP David Kidney and attended by a wide range of parliamentarians from the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

The purpose of the group is to provide a forum for Parliamentarians and other interested parties to debate and highlight the value of science and technology in agriculture.

Commenting on the challenges facing the world and a need to produce more food in *Farmers Weekly*, Mr Kidney said, "I am convinced that advances in science and technology are essential to help UK agriculture respond positively to these challenges. But I am also concerned that without a more balanced and informed debate, these goals may be missed, and opportunities for British farmers may be lost."

## DEFRA gives go-ahead for new GM trial

Environment Secretary, Hilary Benn, has given permission for Leeds University to conduct a trial into a new GM potato, which has been modified to resist infection by potato cyst nematode, a pest which costs British farmers around £65 million a year in lost yields and pesticide costs, according to the University.

The full government announcement can be found at the following link:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2008/080509c.htm>

## Country Life welcomes GM crops

Country Life magazine has published its 2008 Manifesto (10 April 2008), listing "10 achievable aims to make the British countryside a better place to live".

At number seven, the magazine urges its readers: "Learn to Love GM Crops". Quoting Government's Chief Scientist, Prof John Beddington, it states that there are no safety reasons to oppose GM crops, which could boost farm yields and keep down prices.