

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

## abc welcomes Government comments on GM crops

On 21<sup>st</sup> June, Environment Minister Phil Woolas MP called for a renewed debate on the role of genetically modified crops in light of the global food price crisis. In response, abc Chairman Dr Julian Little said:

*“abc welcomes the Government’s recognition that GM crops could be a valuable tool in responding to the increase in food and fuel prices. As we have stressed over the last few years to ministers, shadow ministers and MPs of all parties, GM crops are not a ‘silver bullet’, but must be seen as part of the solution, by producing crops which are more productive, which make more efficient use of scarce resources, and are therefore more sustainable.*

*“The application of advanced genetic science in breeding new crop varieties, including genetic modification methods, cannot alone address these massive challenges. But they can be a major part of the solution, through the development of higher and more reliable crop yields, and the mitigation of major threats to crop production such as the damaging effects of pests, diseases and drought.”*

The full statement can be found at the following link: [www.abcinformation.org](http://www.abcinformation.org)

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## Pro-GM Telegraph commentary

In a recent editorial, *The Telegraph* argued that to combat the rise in food prices, Western governments must do two things: stop imposing restrictions on genetic manipulation, which the newspaper claims “is the best way to increase yield from finite terrain (and which reduces the need for pesticides into the bargain)” and scrap the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy, instead allowing each state to make direct payment to its farmers.

The full article can be found [here](#)

## European Parliament acknowledges role of biotech in combating food prices

On 22 May, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on rising food prices in the EU and in developing countries, including a call on EU institutions to urgently consider the use of biotechnology as a means by which to help Europe respond to rising food prices around the globe. The two amendments were backed by an overwhelming majority of MEPs.

The full text of the resolution can be found at the following link: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0229+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

## New study shows economic and environmental benefits of GM crops

Graham Brookes, Head of UK-based think-tank, PG Economics, has highlighted the significant benefits that GM technology has provided to farmers across the globe.

His report found that since 1996 biotech crops have significantly reduced the release of greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture, reduced pesticide spraying and significantly boosted farmers' incomes.

Of particular note, 43 percent of farm income benefits were due to yield gains, with the balance arising from reductions in the cost of production. Two thirds of the yield gain derived from adoption of insect resistant crops and the balance from herbicide tolerant crops.

The survey found that farmers in developing countries obtained the largest share of the farm income gains over the eleven year period amounting to a total of \$6.19 billion. For farmers in developing countries the total cost of accessing the technology in 2006 was equal to about 17 percent of total technology gains, whilst for farmers in developed countries the cost was 38 percent of the total technology gains.

*"The technology has also made important contributions to increasing the yields of many farmers, raising global production and trading volumes of key crops. World price levels of crops like corn and soybeans would also probably be higher than the current (record high) levels if this technology had not been widely adopted by farmers. These economic and environmental gains have also been greatest in developing countries" [Graham Brookes]*

The full report can be found at the following link:

<http://www.pgeconomics.co.uk/pdf/globalimpactstudyjune2008PGEconomics.pdf>

## Agriculture in the 21st century: GMO Compass survey

The editors of GMO Compass recently conducted an online survey to gauge views on food security and environmental protection. They asked whether European agriculture should make use of all available technologies, including genetic engineering and biotechnology – if negative effects on the environment could be ruled out and positive effects on world nutrition were possible.

**Of the 5,435 ballots cast, 83.9 percent voted for the use of all technologies.**

Another question asked whether GM plants should be taken into consideration as an option to achieving an increase in yields and yield stability whilst protecting the environment at the same time, and this was supported by the vast majority of voters (84.3%).

The full survey can be found at the following link: [http://www.gmo-compass.org/eng/news/stories/360.results\\_gmo\\_compass\\_snapshot\\_poll.html](http://www.gmo-compass.org/eng/news/stories/360.results_gmo_compass_snapshot_poll.html)

Figure 3: Global GM crop plantings by crop 1996-2006 (hectares)

