



PRESS RELEASE

WATER-WISE SOLUTIONS FROM AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

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Fresh water is one of the world's most valuable resources and in the future it is going to be even more precious. Agriculture accounts for 70% of all human water use and, if current trends continue, water shortages will be the single most significant constraint on crop production over the next 50 years.

"Worldwide, agricultural biotechnology could play a significant role in providing farmers yield stability during periods when water supply is scarce by mitigating the effects of drought – or water stress – within a plant" said Nathalie Moll "We already know that areas of high water stress in Europe are likely to dramatically increase in the coming years¹. Yet what is less certain, is if and when EU farmers, whose land is currently 80% rain-fed, will be offered the choice of growing crops which can reduce water loss and improve drought tolerance"

Drought-tolerant crops, maize in particular, are an emerging reality with seeds expected to be commercialized by 2012. Field trials for drought-tolerant corn conducted last year in the Western Great Plains in the United States have met or exceeded 6-10 percent target yield enhancement over the average yield of 70-130 bushels per acre (equivalent to approximately 4.4-8.1 metric tons per hectare). In addition, agricultural practices have already been developed that reduce the amount of ploughing required before planting². This means the soil surface is not broken which helps trap soil moisture. Under drought conditions this can mean the difference between having a crop to harvest and crop failure. It also helps reduce fossil fuel use, carbon dioxide emission and soil erosion.

"These GM crops could play a crucial role, both in the EU and Worldwide, in promoting sustainable water use whilst increasing agricultural output" said Moll. "But the only way to tap into this resource is if new GM crops are approved for cultivation. In the EU today, farmers don't have the choice about what they grow because new GM crops are not being approved. We call on EU regulators to lead by example, heed the advice of their own scientists and enable these technologies to play the role that they can and should towards meeting this vast global challenge".

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Notes to Editors

¹ DG Agriculture working document on "Adaption to Climate Change: the Challenge for European Agriculture and Rural Areas". Due for publication in April 2009

² [EuropaBio Green Biotechnology and Climate Change](#)

About EuropaBio

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