



The European Association for Bioindustries

Europe's farmers again call for access to GM crops to meet challenge to feed the world

When will Europe's politicians listen?

Brussels, 9 February 2010

The uptake of new technology such as genetic modification is the most important tool in the box to meet the challenge of nourishing a growing global population. That is the message from thousands of farmers who have recently taken part in a global poll run in 6 leading farming magazines.

The UK Farmers Weeklyⁱ and the Dutch Boerderij gave European farmers the chance to air their views on solutions to feeding the world, while votes also rushed in from their counterparts in South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, USA and Canada.

The results tell their own story. With 37.1% of the total votes, new technologies and genetic modification were by far the most popular of the five presented key factors. The remaining votes were split between broader expertise through education and training (20.3%), investment in research and development (18%), removal of trade barriers (14.7%), and government intervention in food production (10%).

Commenting on the poll, Morten Nielsen, Director of Agricultural Biotech at EuropaBio said "Throughout history, farmers have used new technologies in order to meet the needs of society; these results show that things are no different today. Food security and climate change will be two of the major challenges that the world will face in the 21st century. This will require significant changes in how we produce food and while policy makers can play a part, at the end of the day farmers need practical solutions to practical problems. This poll reinforces the message from many European farmers who have been calling for access to GM crops for several yearsⁱⁱ."

Currently, 13.3 million farmers around the world are cultivating a range of GM crops on 125 million hectares of landⁱⁱⁱ. Many more GM products are in the pipeline, including crops that can tolerate extreme weather conditions such as drought and flooding. In Europe however only one GM crop, an insect-resistant maize, has been authorized for cultivation, with many more blocked in the EU regulatory system.

Morten Nielsen went on to comment “With a global population set to surpass 9 billion by 2050, combined with more extreme weather in many parts of the world, European farmers will be required to produce more, from less land, using fewer natural resources. While the rest of the world is positively embracing innovative and safe technology to achieve this, Europe’s politicians are denying their farmers access to the same tools that they clearly want. This poll goes to show that the status quo has to change”.

Notes to Editors:

i <http://www.fwi.co.uk/Articles/2010/02/05/119843/You-say-science-will-feed-the-world.htm>

ii ISAAA Executive Summary 2008

<http://www.isaaa.org/resources/publications/briefs/39/executivesummary/pdf/Brief%2039%20-%20Executive%20Summary%20-%20English.pdf>

iii EuropaBio factsheet: EU Farmers and GM Crops – a Matter of Choice

http://www.europabio.org/positions/GBE/PP_100129_Farmerschoice.pdf

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About EuropaBio

EuropaBio's mission is to promote an innovative and dynamic biotechnology-based industry in Europe. EuropaBio, (the European Association for Bioindustries), has 69 corporate and 7 associate members operating worldwide, 4 Bioregions and 26 national biotechnology associations representing some 1800 small and medium sized enterprises.

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