



Press Release

13 million farmers around the world can't be wrong: It's time to give European farmers the same choice

Brussels, 12 February 2009

The number of EU farmers wanting the choice to cultivate biotech crops is on the increase, EuropaBio, the biotech industry association, reported today. The findings, drawn from a set of recent surveys¹ carried out across Europe, echo the ever increasing worldwide demand for biotech crops as shown by the release of yesterday's global cultivation figures².

"European farmers are increasingly interested in using new technologies such as agricultural biotechnology to meet the multiple challenges of feeding a growing population whilst minimising the impact on the environment" James Ede of the National Farmers Union of the United Kingdom, speaking at the press conference in Brussels.

In the coming weeks, European Ministers will have the opportunity to vote and end the 11 year moratorium on new biotech cultivation approvals and to lift unscientific bans in a number of Member States. "Europe's political leaders should respond to the demands of their farmers and offer them the freedom to choose the same tools available to their competitors globally" said James Ede.

Nathalie Moll of EuropaBio said: "Agbiotech cultivation in the EU has increased year upon year in those countries where farmers can choose. The national surveys show that even in countries where no agbiotech cultivation is possible because of unscientific bans, an 11 year moratorium on new cultivation approvals or vandalism, farmers want the choice to have access to the technology".

Only today the Figaro revealed a suppressed report dating back to last month where the French Food Safety Agency AFSSA concluded that the French ban of biotech cultivation, being voted on in Brussels on 16 February, is scientifically unjustified, in line with EFSA's opinion of October 2008. This is reminiscent of the suppression, by Government, of the Italian report on the benefits of GMOs to increase food safety revealed in November 2007³. "How can we expect consumer confidence to increase if governments don't base decisions on science or worse still, hide the science?" concluded Nathalie Moll.

In its annual study the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA)⁴, found that 13.3 million farmers in a record 25 countries planted 125 million hectares of biotech crops in 2008. These results showed an additional 1.3 million farmers planted 10.7 million new hectares of biotech crops in three new countries, including Egypt and Burkina Faso, in 2008.
-ENDS

¹ See compilation of surveys in 'Note to Editors' for details

² ISAAA brief Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops 2008

³ National Institute for Research on Food and Nutrition

http://www.inran.it/inran/rapporti_con_il_mipaf/progetti_strategici/OGM%20in%20Agricoltura%20prodotti.pdf

⁴ ISAAA is an international not-for-profit organization. Its mission is to contribute to poverty alleviation, by sharing knowledge on biotech crops and facilitating donation and transfer of crop biotech applications to increase crop productivity and income generation for resource-poor farmers, and to bring about a safer environment and more sustainable agricultural development.

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Agricultural Biotechnology in Europe EU Farmers' right to choose

http://www.europabio.org/documents/PR120209_slides.pdf.pdf

Surveys referenced include:

- **“Percezione degli OGM: sondaggio presso maiscoltori lombardi”** Sept 17-Oct 5, 2007 conducted by Demoskopea; Sample size: Maize farmers in Lombardy, Italy
67% of farmers said they would plant GM maize if Italian law permitted (equates to an area of GM maize of 216,900 hectares).
81% of farmers agreed it is nonsense to ban GMOs for cultivation but allow them for feed.
- **“Eurisko Survey of farmers' acceptance of GMOs”**. Italy. Eurisko Sample size: 88.600 growers - Sample qualifier: growing at least 95 ha Results are reported here:
<http://www.cia.it/rassegnastampa/10102005/033.pdf>
- **“FSE Grower Survey”** UK. Scimac - All farmers taking part in GM crop trials over the previous three years - Feedback from questionnaires: 72% - Responses account for 74% of FSE sites http://www.scimac.org.uk/files/FSEQuestionnaire2.ppt#271,1,Slide_1
95% of farmers would grow GM crops on their farm if available commercially.
- **“UK farmer's attitudes to Agricultural Biotechnology”** Conducted by The National Farm Research Unit – Sample Size 24,039 farmers in UK. April 2005-March 2008 and published 31 March 2008.
45% of farmers are in favour, 39% don't know and only 15% are against.
When asked the same question, in 2004/2005 42% of farmers were in favour, 40% didn't know and 18% were against.
- **“Research on knowledge and opinion of Polish farmers on growing GMO”** Poland. Conducted by Pracownia Badan Społecznych. Commissioned by Polish Federation of Biotechnology Sample size: 1042 growers
<http://www.pfb.p.lodz.pl/main/main.php?idp=30&id=9>
In 2004: 59% of farmers agreed that farmers should have the option to plant or not plant approved biotech crops.
- **“GMO – presentation of the marketing test results”** Poland. Martin&Jacob
<http://www.pfb.p.lodz.pl/main/main.php?idp=30&id=9>
In 2006: 85% of farmers agreed that farmers should have the option to plant or not plant approved biotech crops.
- **Spontaneous signatures' collection: "Für den Fortschritt in der Landwirtschaft und gegen Vandalismus und kriminelle Feldzerstörungen" (In favor of the farming progress and against vandalism and criminal field destruction)** GermanyBDP (BUNDESVERBAND DEUTSCHER PFLANZENZÜCHTER E.V.) <http://www.bdp-online.de>
- **Farmer biotech survey**, France. September 2007 conducted by BVA Agribusiness
Farmers representing 62% of the total French maize hectares said farmers should have the option to plant or not plant approved biotech crops.
- **"Zur Akzeptanz von gentechnisch verändertem Saatgut in der deutschen Landwirtschaft"** (GM seeds' acceptance in the German farming industry) University of Göttingen in cooperation with University Osnabrück
www.unigoettingen.de/de/kat/download/664f04033eb0294e397291012f9de408.pdf/Studie.pdf
33% of farmers are in favour of GM seeds, 38% are undecided and 29% are against
- **Farmer Biotech Survey, Hungary**. September 2007 conducted by Ipsos Szonda
Farmers representing 53% of the total Hungarian maize hectares said farmers should have the option to plant or not plant approved biotech crops.
- **Farmer Biotech Survey, Spain**. December 2008 conducted by Product & Market
Farmers representing 83% of the total Spanish maize hectares said farmers should have the option to plant or not plant approved biotech crops.

About EuropaBio

EuropaBio is the European Association for Bioindustries, solely and uniquely bringing together bioscience companies from all fields of research and development, testing, manufacturing and distribution of biotechnology products. It has 68 corporate members operating worldwide, 5 associate members, 4 BioRegions and 25 national biotechnology associations representing some 1800 small and medium sized enterprises involved in research. Its mission is to promote an innovative and dynamic biotechnology-based industry in Europe. <http://www.europabio.org/>