



The European Association for Bioindustries

Q&A

Explaining the state of GM crops in the European Union

1. In 2010, GM crops were cultivated in 8 EU Member States; Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.
2. GM crop cultivation remains limited in the European Union (EU) partly because of the limited choice farmers have with only two products on the market. Moreover, the heavy administrative burden, such as monitoring requirements and coexistence regulations, discourage farmers from planting GM crops.
3. MS cultivation bans and stringent coexistence measures restrict farmers in most MS from taking advantage of the modern seed varieties.
4. In 2010, EU farmers reduced overall area of maize planted because of the market outlook and unfavourable weather conditions. The maize price expectations influenced farmers' planting decisions.
5. In 2010, the Amflora potato was approved for cultivation in the EU, and three countries have planted it; Germany, Sweden and Czech Republic.
6. Many farmers are constrained by restrictions placed in land rental contracts, threats by neighbours and intimidation by activists and NGOs.
7. If enough administrative barriers, restrictions and conditions are put in place by a Member State, cultivation becomes economically and logistically impossible thereby again denying farmers the choice to plant an approved crop. For example, the specificity of registration requirements for fields tends to discourage farmers from growing biotech crops.

Other messages:

- **15.4 million farmers** grew genetically improved crops in 2010 (of whom over 90% were small scale farmers in developing countries). Global hectareage of biotech crops continued its strong growth in 2010 reaching 148 million hectares. The global agricultural surface of genetically improved crops has been increasing by 10% or more each year since their introduction in 1996¹.
- **Many different genetically improved plants are available** worldwide for cultivation but **in Europe only two** particular types of biotech crop have been approved so far for cultivation, i.e. the insect-resistant maize MON810 and the

¹ ISAAA report 2010 on Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops <http://www.isaaa.org/default.asp>

Amflora potato with an increased amylopectin content, which has been approved in March 2010.

- In 2010 a European Commission research compendium “A decade of EU-funded GMO research”² revealed that over the last 25 years, more than 500 independent research groups have investigated the safety of genetically modified crops. They concluded, “according to the projects’ results, there is, as of today, *no scientific evidence associating GMOs with higher risks for the environment or for food and feed safety than conventional plants and organisms.*”
- More compelling evidence of GM crops’ benefits to farmers continues to emerge following 15 years of commercial experience. For instance, [research showed](#) that growing insect resistant maize provides significant economic benefits even to neighbouring farmers who grow non-transgenic varieties of maize due to area wide suppression of damaging maize pests. These benefit both GM and non-GM farmers.³
- For continued real growth in the adoption of biotech in Spain, Portugal and beyond, new traits, which are already safely imported and consumed in Europe, must be approved for farmers to grow on their own land. If these were approved for EU cultivation, there is no doubt that Spanish and Portuguese farmers would adopt them at the same impressive rate at which they adopted MON810 following approval in 1998.

² A decade of EU-funded GMO research, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/1688>

³ GM maize offers windfall for conventional farms, <http://www.nature.com/news/2010/101007/full/news.2010.523.html>