

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

Relating To Crops

Food security is a fundamental global concern for an increasing human population and is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. Many countries are already unable to provide adequate quantity and quality of nutrition for their populations and these problems are likely to be exacerbated by climate change. GM crops have now been shown to deliver increased yields and/or reductions in pesticide without adverse effects on human health. Therefore, wider use of these technologies may provide an effective, indeed essential, way of improving food security, particularly in developing countries where the use of agrochemicals is often prohibitively expensive. However, public debate and policy on GM technologies, although encompassing both scientific and moral issues, has largely centered on concerns that the technologies are either inappropriate or inadequately tested.

CABI's role in assessing benefits and risks of GM technologies

CABI takes an objective and independent approach to the introduction and uptake GM technologies for crops:

- CABI recognises the benefits from the introduction of appropriate genetically modified crops, in terms of increased food security, improved nutrition and reduced pesticide use.
- CABI notes that recent scientific advances (such as CRISPR/Cas-9 or Marker-Assisted breeding) offer alternative ways to develop crops with desirable properties without the need to create GMOs that have non-native DNA introduced into their genomes.
- CABI also recognises that GM technologies must be thoroughly tested before adoption, to prevent adverse effects on human health or food quality.
- CABI affirms that it is essential for potential environmental impacts (especially on indigenous biodiversity) to be carefully explored before these new technologies are introduced.
- CABI recognises the legitimate needs and rights of sovereign nations to develop and implement their own national policies for the introduction and registration of GM technologies.

For all of these reasons, CABI considers that it is important to evaluate the balance of benefits and risks for any introduction of GM products on a case-by-case basis, within a global framework for implementation of the technology as a whole. CABI will therefore assist through:

- Gathering and providing objective and impartial information on GMOs and related biotech issues.
- Assisting in the development of national or regional policies on crop-related GM technologies through the provision and scientific interpretation of reliable data.
- Identifying and resolving researchable constraints relating to informed decision making regarding the uptake of crop-related GM technologies.
- Providing technical support and risk analysis for the evaluation of crop-related GM technologies and assessment of their biosafety and suitability for new farming systems.
- Providing technical assistance and training to build local and regional capabilities for the assessment, introduction and management of crop-related GM technologies with the fully informed support of appropriate national authorities.

CABI will only proceed with work involving crop-related GM technologies that is in full compliance with the national legislation of the recipient country and after gaining written approval from the relevant governmental agency.

