

The RASE and Genetically Modified Crops

RASE Position Statement on Genetic Modification (GM)

- The Royal Agricultural Society of England recognises the importance of applications of biotechnology for the future development of modern agriculture. This includes the exploitation of genetically modified crops;
- As with all new technologies, RASE is of the view that the future availability and exploitation of GM crops should be based on scientific evidence for their benefit in agricultural systems and the wider environmental impact of crop production;
- RASE is firmly in favour of public and private resources being devoted to scientific research and evaluation of GM crops under field conditions;
- Further, the Society is concerned that public sector research in GM technology in Europe has been curtailed, hampering the ability to garner knowledge and to produce potential new products;
- RASE believes that British and European farmers should have the option to use approved GM products if they wish to do so, drawing on empirical evidence and knowledge gained through widespread use of GM technology in both developed and developing countries for the last 14 years;
- In particular, evaluation programmes will need to recognise that farm systems must develop in a sufficiently complementary manner so that, at the same time, farmers should be able to choose not to use GM products on their farms;
- RASE acknowledges that there are those who have concerns over the use of genetic modification and supports the need for a continuing public debate in the UK about the use of GM;
- Given the UK's favourable climate for crop and livestock production, coupled with the increasing global demand for food, RASE considers it extremely unwise to limit UK farmers' ability to optimise the application of any new technology with the potential to make agriculture more productive and sustainable;
- RASE is particularly concerned that UK and European farmers are finding themselves in a position where they are commercially disadvantaged in the global commodities market in which they have to compete. Lack of access to the products of GM technology adapted to European agricultural conditions will exacerbate this situation to the detriment of the region's agricultural productivity.