



Media Release

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GM fruits, flavours and freshness Gene technology forums for the horticulture industry

Gene technology forums for the horticulture industry will be held this week in Gatton and Ayr in Queensland to provide growers with information about research and development taking place in their industry.

"The forums have been designed to provide participants with a greater understanding of the science of gene technology, how it is regulated, current research projects, the role of field trials, consumer perceptions, and how Australia sits in the global market," said Paula Fitzgerald, Executive Manager, Agrifood Awareness Australia.

The forums have been organised by Agrifood Awareness Australia with the support of Horticulture Australia's AusHort Research and Development Program.

"In 2001, over 52.6 million hectares of genetically modified (GM) crops were grown around the world involving some 5.5 million farmers from thirteen industrial and developing countries," she said.

"While there are currently no GM fruits and vegetables available in Australia, now is an ideal time for growers to obtain as much information as possible about this research, in order to make informed decisions," she said.

"There is considerable gene technology research being undertaken in horticulture to improve crops such as bananas, lettuce, pineapple, papaw, passionfruit, tomato and mango," she said.

"Much of this research is at least five to ten years away from commercialisation," she said.

"Researchers are investigating in-built pest and disease resistance, and improved quality," she said.

"Using gene technology, researchers not only develop GM varieties, but can also identify genes and their function, to produce improved conventional varieties," she said.

Speakers at the event include Paula Fitzgerald from Agrifood Awareness Australia, Jonathan Benyai from the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator, Professor Peter Gresshoff from the University of Queensland (Gatton event) and Professor James Dale from the Queensland University of Technology (Ayr event).

The forums are part of series being held around Australia. Other events will take place in Perth, Echuca and Launceston.

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The first forum will be held in Gatton from 3.30-6.00pm, Wednesday, 17 April, in the Function Room of the Foundation Building at the University of Queensland's Gatton Campus. The second forum will be held in Ayr from 4.30-7.00pm on Thursday, 18 April, in the Tuscon Room of the Queens Hotel. All media welcome.

For further information contact:

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