



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Producers Forum welcomes global surge of GM crops**

The Producers Forum welcomes the announcement overnight that the adoption of GM crops by farmers across the globe has again surged ahead.

Producers Forum Incoming National Convenor, Heather Baldock, says the milestone of the more than **one billion hectares** of GM crops was achieved in 2010, according to figures just published by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA).

She says this signifies that GM crops are proving their worth.

“In just 15 years after commercialization, the 1 billionth hectare was planted in 2010 by one of the 15.4 million farmers in 29 countries who are benefiting from the technology.

One billion hectares is roughly equivalent to the land area of China or the United States.

“With an unprecedented 87-fold increase between 1996 and 2010, biotech crops are the fastest-adopted crop technology in the history of modern agriculture,” she says.

The ISAAA report notes that Australia saw the largest proportional year-on-year increase in biotech crop plantings at 184 percent. Hundreds of farmers in NSW, Victoria and WA grew around 133,000 hectares of GM canola varieties in 2010.

Internationally, the ISAAA report also notes that:

- The GM crop hectareage increased by 14 million hectares - or 10% - between 2009 and 2010 alone. That’s the second highest annual hectare growth ever
- In hectareage rank order, the key countries are: USA (66.8 million), Brazil (25.4 million), Argentina (22.9 million), India (9.4 million), Canada (8.8 million), China (3.5 million), Paraguay (2.6 million), Pakistan (2.4 million), South Africa (2.2 million) and Uruguay (1.1 million).
- Developing countries grew 48 percent of global GM crops in 2010 and will exceed industrialized nations in their plantings by 2015
- Of the 15.4 million farmers using the technology in 2010, 14.4 million were small-scale, resource-poor farmers in developing countries
- In 2010, three nations grew GM crops commercially for the first time.
- Approximately 600,000 farmers in Pakistan and 375,000 farmers in Myanmar planted insect-resistant *Bt* cotton, and Sweden (the first Scandinavian country to commercialise GM crops) planted a new

high-quality starch potato approved for industrial and feed use. Germany also planted the same biotech potatoes in 2010.

Other key findings include:

- More than 1 billion people throughout Asia, who are among 250 million small-scale rice-producing households cultivating about one-half a hectare, are potential beneficiaries from the expected commercialization of insect-resistant *Bt* rice expected to be introduced before 2015. A variety of rice ('Golden Rice'), that will assist Vitamin A deficient populations, is expected to be available for planting in the Philippines by 2013 followed by Bangladesh, Indonesia and Vietnam.
- In the next five years, the timing of commercialised GM rice, and drought tolerance as a trait in maize and several other crops are seminal catalysts for the future adoption of GM crops globally. Drought tolerant maize is expected in the U.S. as early as 2012, and importantly, in Africa by 2017. The decision, four years ago, to delay herbicide tolerant wheat also is being revisited and many countries are fast-tracking the development of GM wheats with traits including drought tolerance, disease resistance and grain quality – the first of which are expected to be ready for commercialization as early as 2017.
- Several other crops are expected to be approved for commercialization by 2015, including:
  - biotech potatoes resistant to the most important disease of potatoes in the world, "late blight," (the cause of the Irish famine in 1845)
  - sugarcane with improved agronomic and quality traits,
  - disease-resistant bananas,
  - *Bt* eggplant,
  - tomato, broccoli, cabbage, sweet potato, pulses and groundnut.

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*The Producers Forum is a national group grain, oilseed, dried fruit, cotton, dairy, and beef and sheep producers from Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and West Australia. For further information visit: [www.producersforum.net.au](http://www.producersforum.net.au)*

*The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) is a not-for-profit organization with an international network of centers designed to contribute to the alleviation of hunger and poverty by sharing knowledge and crop biotechnology applications. For more information visit: [www.isaaa.org](http://www.isaaa.org).*