

# What do we need to know about GMOs?

## What are the proven risks and benefits? In many cases there are no clear answers.

The risks and potential benefits of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are viewed very differently from one European country to another. Do genetically modified crops support sustainable agriculture or could they harm biodiversity? Will GM crops help feed the world? What are their economic impacts and do they pose new health risks? It seems that European societies have not found clear answers to such questions, so GMOs are still a highly controversial topic. As a result, the EU Member States follow different approaches. For example, some allow the cultivation of GM crops, and others have enacted national cultivation bans.

This situation is linked in part to gaps in our knowledge, which may hamper a widely accepted evaluation of the risks and benefits of existing GM products. Views on risks and benefits also depend

## Developing a research agenda for GMO impact research

The EU research project **PreSto GMO ERA-Net** lays the groundwork for transnational research by EU Member States on the health, environmental and economic impacts of GMOs.

PreSto GMO ERA-Net has not only mapped and evaluated previous efforts in the area of GMO risk and benefit assessment; the project has also listed ongoing research and identified future European research needs linked to anticipated new GM products that are being developed worldwide.

These results have been used to highlight critical knowledge gaps in past and present GMO impact research. The results are currently being aligned with stakeholder views. Multi-step stakeholder surveys will be used to identify the most important research needs, making the work of this project more relevant from a broader societal perspective.

All project activities were brought together in the final stage to develop advice for implementing joint research activities by EU Member States in the context of the EU-funded programme Horizon 2020. The outcome of these joint research activities should then significantly improve the basis for informed decision-making on questions relating to the risk-benefit assessment of GMOs.

The final results of the PreSto project will be presented and discussed at a public event at Expo Milan 2015 on 17th August 2015.



on the value systems, expectations and concerns of citizens and NGOs. These are issues that research projects have probably not addressed in sufficient detail in the past.

In addition, new GM applications are being developed worldwide and could reach the European market in the foreseeable future. This is another challenge facing Europe in its search for a responsible approach to this matter.

It is a situation that demands a timely conception of aligned research programmes that support a purposeful and adequate risk and benefit analysis of the use of GMOs.

### At a glance: PreSto GMO project

- Has identified gaps in existing knowledge relevant to GMO risk-benefit assessments.
- Has engaged stakeholders to ensure that future research will be highly relevant for European societies.
- Promotes the accessibility of existing scientific information for stakeholders, regulators and end users.
- Finally, PreSto GMO brings together government ministries, agencies and funding bodies from different EU Member States to develop advice on the implementation of transnational research programmes on topics relevant for GMO risk and benefit assessments.

For more information see: [www.presto-gmo-era-net.eu](http://www.presto-gmo-era-net.eu)

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ART  
LITERATURE  
SCIENCE



**17th AUGUST  
2015 6.00 pm**

## What do we need to know about GMOs?

### Public Discussion on Research Needs to Better Understand Risks and Benefits of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

We would like to invite you to our CaffExpò on GMO impact research that will be held **on the 17th of August (start: 6.00 pm)** at the International Exposition 2015 in Milan.

CaffExpò is an initiative started in 2012 to encourage debates on topics around the core theme of EXPO Milano 2015, "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life" (<http://www.expo2015.org/en>). The main idea is that informal communications favour new opportunities to share ideas, create new networks, and promote the collaboration and knowledge sharing between general public, professionals and institutions.

**In this event we would like to present you the activities and results of PreSto GMO ERA-Net (Preparatory Steps towards a GMO Research ERA-Net), an EU research project funded by the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Union.** The main goal of the project is to create and implement an ERA-Net (European Research Area Network) that will coordinate transnational research on the effects of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the areas of human and animal health, the environment and techno-economics. The ERA-Net will focus on GMOs intentionally released into the environment and/or used immediately in feed and food applications. To allow an informed discussion about whether and how biotechnology can be used to provide solutions to current and future challenges, invited experts involved in the project will update us on ongoing research, research gaps and future European research needs linked to existing and anticipated new GM products that are being developed worldwide. **The basic idea is to align on-going and future research programmes among the EU Member States.**

The event will be organized as such: a distinguished scientist will address the topic while another expert or entrepreneur with a strong expertise will "challenge" him with questions and comments, interpreting and expressing the general ideas of the public. Expert professors in the subject will manage and stimulate the discussion involving all participants. Given the relevance of the topic, we hope that you will find this event a worthwhile challenge and agree to take part.

To confirm your participation, please send an e-mail to [maura.calliera@unicatt.it](mailto:maura.calliera@unicatt.it). The project is able to cover the EXPO ticket for some of the participants. Please specify clearly your request and if you need such coverage in your confirmation.



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