



GM FOOD SAFETY: FACTS, UNCERTAINTIES, AND ASSESSMENT

*The OECD Edinburgh Conference on the Scientific and Health*

*Aspects of Genetically Modified Foods*

*28 February - 1 March 2000*

## PROGRAMME

LA SÉCURITÉ DES ALIMENTS GÉNÉTIQUEMENT MODIFIÉS :  
FAITS, INCERTITUDES ET ÉVALUATION

*Conférence OCDE d'Edimbourg sur les aspects scientifiques et sanitaires des  
aliments génétiquement modifiés*

*28 février - 1er mars 2000*



GM Food Safety: Facts, Uncertainties and Assessment  
*The OECD Edinburgh Conference on the Scientific and Health Aspects of Genetically Modified Foods*  
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- Date:** 28 February - 1 March 2000
- Location:** Edinburgh International Conference Centre
- Attendance:** By invitation only, limited to approximately 400 participants from around the world, including experts from academia, consumer and other interest groups, industry, international organisations, OECD government representatives, and the Press.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of the Conference is to bring together a diverse group of participants for a constructive dialogue on the safety of GM food, with an emphasis on the underlying science and on human health. Through a comprehensive and balanced set of presentations, and through a frank exchange of views, answers will be sought to the following questions:

- ◆ What is the current state of scientific understanding of the genetic modification of foods, and what are the areas in which scientific uncertainty exists? What are the current trends and future prospects? What are the potential benefits and risks?
- ◆ How do the natural and social sciences help us understand and ensure the safety of GM foods (for example, by comparing the health risks associated with GM and conventional foods)? How do consumers perceive food safety risks?
- ◆ How is GM food safety assessed within existing regulatory frameworks?
- ◆ Is further international co-operation on scientific GM food safety issues required?

The genetic modification of food, while currently a matter of concern for members of the public and governments, is just one of a set of interrelated issues connected with practical applications of advances in genetics, molecular biology, and related fields. The impact of GM food on human health is the principal subject of this conference, and it is closely linked to other important issues, for example: effects on the environment and on national economies, international trade, as well as cultural and ethical concerns. Whilst these topics will not be excluded from the Conference, it is hoped that an emphasis on human health will lead to a focussed, constructive debate and a useful outcome.

The event is part of a programme of work at the OECD to review and report on selected aspects of biotechnology and food safety in response to mandates from OECD Ministers, and to a request from leaders of the Group of Eight (G8) industrial countries. The report of the Conference will be submitted to the G8 representatives this year.

**Format:**

Presentations and discussions will focus on three principal themes: “Genetic Modification and Food Production”, “GM Food and Human Health” and “Regulatory Frameworks and Consumer Involvement”. In each session there will be a panel response and a plenary discussion.

The final day will see the Conference working towards conclusions. Rapporteurs will present their summaries of the key points arising from each session; this will be followed by an opportunity for conference participants to further discuss these issues. The Chairman's overall report of the Conference will be made available on the OECD website: [www.oecd.org/subject/biotech/edinburgh.htm](http://www.oecd.org/subject/biotech/edinburgh.htm).



## DAY 1 - MONDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2000

08:15 **REGISTRATION**

09:15 **WELCOMING ADDRESS AND OPENING REMARKS**

Welcoming Address:

Susan Deacon MSP, Minister for Health and Community Care, Scottish Executive  
 The Rt. Hon. Dr. Mo Mowlam, Minister for the Cabinet Office, United Kingdom  
 The Hon. Donald J Johnston, Secretary-General, OECD

Opening Remarks - The GM Debate: Towards a New Dialogue:

**Conference Chairman:** Sir John Krebs, Professor of Zoology, Oxford University

10:00 **SESSION 1: GENETIC MODIFICATION AND FOOD PRODUCTION**

**Chair:** Professor Francisco Bolívar- Zapata (President, National Academy of Sciences, Mexico)

*The session will review the history and development of genetic modification of food. It will provide an opportunity for a wide-ranging general discussion of concerns, risks and benefits, as well as the role for GM food in meeting global needs.*

Introduction by Chair

10:05 Presentation 1.1 Research Trends in Crop Genetics and Transgenics  
 Professor Charles Arntzen (President and CEO, Boyce Institute for Plant Research Inc., United States)

10:25 Presentation 1.2 Areas of Concern with Respect to GM Crops  
 Dr Suman Sahai (President, Gene Campaign, India)

10:45 Presentation 1.3 Transgenic Food: Need and Safety  
 Professor Zhangliang Chen (Vice-President, Beijing University, China)

11:05 *Coffee*

11:30 Presentation 1.4 Crop Biotechnology: Benefits, Risks and Ownership  
 Professor Gordon Conway (President, Rockefeller Foundation, United States)

11:50

### **Panel and Plenary Discussion 1**

Panel Members: Mr Benedikt Haerlin (Greenpeace International)  
 Mrs Marilena Lazzarini (CEO, Institute for Consumer Defense, Brazil)  
 Dr Andreas Seiter (Vice President, External Relations, Novartis, Germany)

13.15 *Lunch*



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14:30 **SESSION 2 : GM FOOD AND HUMAN HEALTH**

**Chair:** Professor Goran Hansson (Professor of Cardiovascular Research, Karolinska Institute and Hospital, Sweden)

*The session will provide both a historical perspective on food safety and the effects on human health, and a forward look at changing patterns of diet and their implications. It will address both the potential of GM food to improve human health and the possible health risks.*

Introduction by Chair

14:35 Presentation 2.1 An Overview of Food Safety - Impacts of Diet and Nutrition on Health  
 Professor Ambroise Martin (Professor of Nutrition and Biochemistry, Medical School, University of Lyon, France)

14:55 Presentation 2.2 GM Foods: Opportunities to Improve Human Health  
 Professor Marc Weksler (Professor of Geriatric Medicine, Weill Medical College, Cornell University, United States)

15:15 Presentation 2.3 Possible Health Risks of GM Foods  
 Professor Hans Günter Gassen (Professor of Biochemistry, Darmstadt Technical University, Germany)

15:45 *Coffee*

16:15 Presentation 2.4 Food Allergy and GMOs  
 Professor Carsten Bindslev-Jensen (Head of Allergy Centre, Odense University Hospital, Denmark)

16:35 **Panel and Plenary Discussion 2**

Panel Members: Dr Arpad Pusztai (Private Consultant, United Kingdom)  
 Professor Zhangliang Chen (Vice-President, Beijing University, China)  
 Professor Alan McHughen (Professor and Senior Research Scientist, University of Saskatchewan)  
 Mr Pete Riley (Senior Food and Biotechnology Campaigner, Friends of the Earth, United Kingdom)  
 Dr James Maryanski (Senior Scientist, Centre for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, US Food and Drug Administration)

19:00 **Reception** All Conference Participants  
 Hosted by Ross Finnie MSP, Minister for Rural Affairs, Scottish Executive



**DAY 2 - TUESDAY, 29 FEBRUARY 2000**

8.30 *Coffee*

9.15 **SESSION 3A: REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AND CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT**

**Chair:** Dr Harry Kuiper (Head, Department of Food Safety and Health, RIKILT Wageningen University and Research Centre, the Netherlands)

*In this session the fundamental regulatory principles involved in protecting human health with regard to food safety will be reviewed. There will be an opportunity to compare regulatory oversight in OECD and developing countries, including examining the implications of globalisation, and the work of international bodies. The contribution of the social sciences to understanding and dealing with consumer concerns will be addressed.*

Introduction by Chair

9:20 Presentation 3.1 Prevention, Precaution, Consumer Involvement: Which Model for Food Safety in the Future?  
 Professor Bernard Chevassus-au-Louis (President of the Board, French Health and Food Safety Agency)

9:40 Presentation 3.2 Food Safety Assessment and Regulatory Oversight in OECD Countries  
 Dr Peter Kearns (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD))

10:00 Presentation 3.3 Biotechnology Regulations in South Africa  
 Professor Jennifer Thomson (University of Cape Town, Department of Microbiology, South Africa)

10:20 Presentation 3.4 The Work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission  
 Dr Alan Randell (Codex Alimentarius, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO))

10:40 *Coffee*

11:15 Presentation 3.5 Widening the Circle: Engaging the Public in Policy Making for GM Food  
 Professor John Durant (Head of Science Communication, Science Museum, United Kingdom)

11:35 Presentation 3.6 Less Risk, More Choice: A Consumer's Perspective  
 Mr Julian Edwards (Director General, Consumers International)

11:55 **Panel and Plenary Discussion 3A**

Panel Members: Dr Val Giddings (Vice-President for Food and Agriculture, Biotechnology Industry Organisation (BIO), United States)  
 Dr Michael Hansen (Consumers Union, United States)  
 Mr Joseph Muchabaiwa Gopo (Biotechnology Institute of SIRDC)  
 Mr Martin van Zwanenberg (ex-Divisional Director, Food Technology, Marks & Spencer, United Kingdom)

13:30 *Lunch*



14.45 **SESSION 3B : REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AND CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT**  
(continued)

Presentation 3.7 Codex Alimentarius Commission: Perspective on Labelling of Food and Food Ingredients Obtained Through Modern Biotechnology  
Dr Anne MacKenzie (Chair, Codex Committee on Food Labelling)

15.05 **Panel and Plenary Discussion 3B**

Panel Members: Mme Marion Guillou (Director for Food, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, France)  
Ms Gwenn Straszburger (Senior Adviser, Euro Coop, Brussels)  
Ms Lisa Katic (Director of Scientific and Nutrition Policy, Grocery Manufacturers of America)

*Coffee available*



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**DAY 3 – WEDNESDAY, 1 MARCH 2000**

8.30 *Coffee*

9.30 **SESSION 4: WORKING TOWARDS A COMMON VISION**

**Chair:** Sir John Krebs

Introduction by Chair

9:35 **Keynote Speech** Benign Biotechnology: Harnessing the Best of Science for the Public Good  
 Dr Ismail Serageldin (Vice President, World Bank and Chairman,  
 Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research)

10:05 **Rapporteurs:** Dr Peter Tindemans (The Netherlands)  
 Dr Iain Gillespie (United Kingdom)

*The rapporteurs will present the draft summaries of the three individual sessions, with an emphasis on four areas: factual information reported, areas where substantial consensus exists, main areas of disagreement, and topics for further scientific investigation. Following the Conference, a Chairman's report will be made available to the public.*

*Coffee available*

10.35 Plenary Discussion

12.15 Closing Remarks:  
 Sir John Krebs

12.30 Conference Close

13:00 Press Conference

