

GM Science Review

NOTE OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF GM CROPS DRAFTING GROUP

Wednesday, 2 April 2003

The Department of Trade & Industry, 151 Buckingham Palace Road, London

Present:

Dr. Mark Avery (a.m. only)
Ms. Julie Hill
Dr. Simon Bright
Professor William Sutherland
Professor Phil Dale
Dr. Brian Johnson

Secretariat:

Miss Maia Gedde (Secretary) OST
Dr. Adrian Butt, OST/ DEFRA
Dr Louise Ball, OST (a.m.)

Apologies

1. Apologies for absence were received from: Dianna Bowles, Mick Crawley, Alan Gray, Pat Heslop-Harrison, Jules Pretty, Michael Wilson, Peter Young and Bernard Silverman.

1. Secretary's opening remarks:

2. The subgroup secretary thanked panel members for coming at such short notice and requested agreement to audio record the meetings to aid the secretariat in minute taking. Minutes would be published on the Science Review website.
3. It was agreed that future drafting group meetings would be open to the public to observe.
4. The Secretary reminded members that the aim of the Drafting Group was to consider '*Environmental Impacts of GM crops*' issues of interest and concern to scientists and the public and the scientific rigour of the information submitted under the Review and from other sources. The Group would draft papers summarising the current state of scientific knowledge for presentation and discussion at future Panel meetings. Revised papers, once approved by the Panel, would then be published on the website and would contribute to the final GM Science Review report.
5. The drafting groups are aiming to prepare a first draft of the papers for the Panel meetings of the 29th April. These need to be submitted to the secretariat by the 22nd of April, a week before the main panel meeting.

2. Working arrangements

6. The drafting group were asked whether the meeting should be chaired and if not whether there was agreement for the secretary to facilitate (but not chair) the meetings. Members were content for Maia Gedde to facilitate the meeting.
7. The drafting of text would be a joint effort by the Secretariat and Members: Members contributing their specific expertise and the Secretariat providing background, supporting material, consistency of style and format. The secretariat will collate publications cited on the website and open meetings for members attention.

3. The Review of The Environmental Impacts of GM crops

The Structure of the Report

8. The 'layers' of the report was discussed. It was generally seen as having three: (detailed summary, in depth evaluation of findings based on the review framework and references).
9. Some members thought that the inclusion of 'evaluated' references provided an extra unnecessary layer to the report, although others thought it was important to qualify *what* the paper in question did and did not do and the quality of the material that had been used to arrive at a conclusion. There was general agreement that if there were sufficient time, a very short evaluation of the references would be included. However, it was impossible to conduct an exhaustive review of all the literature available. Therefore the focus would be on the contributions on the website and literature the panel thought of as salient. The panel would bring these papers to the Secretariat's attention who would circulate them amongst the panel for consideration.
10. The tabled summary of the issues within the framework was thought of as useful but perhaps too simplified. This summary would however only be completed once the full paper had been finalised.
11. There would be a distinction between 'peer reviewed papers' and 'opinion' (all non-peer reviewed material).
12. The secretariat agreed to draft a separate brief introductory section to the report, setting the issues in the broader context of the regulatory and safety assessment framework of the environmental impact of GM crops.

Incorporation of Studies Outside the UK

13. International studies/ experience should not be excluded from the drafting group work but only brought in to the review where there was direct relevance to the UK, and the overseas experience could be translated in to UK relevance.

The Issues

14. In drafting the papers it was important to provide evidence of the source of the concern, including the relevant Corr Wilbourn questions, to justify why these were being considered. The review must be issue led. The secretariat agreed to

provide the 'audit-check' for these. The Corr Wilbourn questions that were thought to have specific relevance to Environmental Impacts were: A2 (c); B2; C2; C3; C5; C8; E2; E3; E4 (a) (b); E6; E7; E8; F5; G3; J1; J2.

15. Seven main issues were decided upon:

1. Is the science available to predict the environmental impacts of GM plants?
2. Could GM plants be invasive or persistent, and what might be the impacts?
3. Could GM plants be toxic to wildlife, and what might be the impacts?
4. Could GM crops lead to the rapid development of resistant insects, weeds and diseases, and what might be the impacts?
5. Will herbicide tolerant crops offer new weed control strategies and, if so, what are the likely impacts, positive and negative?
6. Apart from HT crops what are the traits that might give rise to significant environment impacts, positive or negative?
7. Might GM crops significantly change agricultural practice and, if so, what might be the consequences?

16. The main discussion papers would centre around the use of herbicide tolerant crops because this is currently the most pertinent issue for the UK, although other GM traits would also be considered.

17. It was thought that issues 1, 6 and 7 should initially be brainstormed by all drafting group members.

18. The secretariat would approach members to be leaders for the individual issues, providing the first draft of the report papers, which would be presented at the full panel meeting on 29 April.

A.O.B.

19. The secretariat would search for a date for another drafting group meeting in between the main panel meetings of 29 April and 13 May.

**GM Science Panel Secretariat
April 2003**