

Position Statement on Genetically Modified Crop Varieties

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CIMMYT is devoted to research which will provide sustainable increases in agricultural productivity and improve the quality of life of millions of farmers and consumers in developing countries.

- **GM crops have a role.** Genetically modified (GM) crops can play a major role in increasing the productivity of global agriculture, helping farmers to meet the food, feed, and other demands of a rapidly rising world population, while saving water and forest lands. The use of GM crops for nearly two decades has consistently increased harvests, saved farmers money, and reduced the use of pesticides. First generation GM crops featured input-conserving traits, like insect resistance and herbicide tolerance. New GM crop varieties in the pipeline will offer traits such as drought and heat tolerance and improved nutritional quality, healthier food, and nutrient use efficiency.
- **GM crops are not a "magic bullet".** The agricultural productivity increases needed by humanity will not come solely from genetic modification technologies. Conventional but novel research programs—far and away the most significant source of gains in food crop yields worldwide—as well as improved farming techniques, training, improved local markets, better storage facilities, effective supply chains, and favorable agricultural policies are crucial. But for the World to increase agricultural production by almost 2% a year for the next 40 years, all resources and approaches must be marshaled, including GM technologies.
- **Other global priorities.** Enhanced agricultural productivity must be pursued in the context of other pressing global issues, including fossil fuel dependence, soil and atmospheric degradation, climate change, and disease and pest epidemics. CIMMYT actively develops products which assist in these other areas.
- **Sovereignty and safety first.** CIMMYT does not pursue nor advocate increased farm productivity at the expense of human or animal health or environmental safety, nor does the Center support the work of institutions that fail to show proper regard for those concerns and partner country Biosafety regulations and procedures. CIMMYT acknowledges and endorses the safe transfer, handling and use of biotechnologies, minimizing any adverse effects that biotechnologies may have on the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity as stated in the 2000 international agreement *Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity* (or "*Cartagena Protocol*" for short). Further, CIMMYT recognizes and respects the sovereignty of individual nations to determine if, when, and how, GM crops will be used in their territory, and provides technical support as requested in this process.

- **Policies and protocols in place.** CIMMYT supports and implements strict procedures for handling GM crops and living modified organisms (including seeds), either generated by or in collaboration with CIMMYT, or potentially arriving at CIMMYT through material exchanges. To this end, CIMMYT has implemented a ***CIMMYT Biosafety Policy and Procedures on Genetically Modified Organisms***, operating since 2002 and last modified in 2011. The Policy and Procedures mirror international and national regulations and guidelines on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and provide detailed operational measures seeking to ensure that GM products (crops, seeds and other biological materials) resulting from CIMMYT's research, are produced and used safely, and that they will not adversely affect human health, agriculture, biodiversity or the environment. The *CIMMYT Biosafety and Bioethics Committee* oversees the implementation of these Policy and Procedures. In turn, work with infectious agents, bioengineering research materials and equipment and disposal of potentially biological hazardous materials are under the purview of the *Committee of Occupational Health and Safety*.
- **The private and public sectors' complementary roles.** CIMMYT recognizes private companies' leadership in developing and promoting GM crops and related technologies. In line with its continued role to develop, use, and share global public goods, CIMMYT sees its role to focus on serving its primary customer base of small and marginal farmers who may not otherwise have access to such innovations/technologies. To this end, CIMMYT strategically uses intellectual property protection systems, including ascertaining and gaining freedom to operate to ensure and further its capacity to serve farmers and R&D organizations in the developing world.