www.foeeurope.org/GMOs/Index.htm

briefing

february 2009 | friends of the earth international

false industry claims of increased biotech crop cultivation in europe

In 2008, the cultivation of genetically modified (GM) crops in Europe has been so dismal that the biotech industry has had to cook the books. The European biotech lobby association, EuropaBio, has inflated the figures by almost a quarter and has claimed that GM crop cultivation in the EU in 2008 showed "a 21% *increase over 2007*"[1] when in fact there has been a 2% DECREASE[2].

EuropaBio erased the latest country to have banned growing GM crops – France[3] - from its calculations. By doing this, the biotech industry could falsely claim an increase for 2008. The benefits of this kind of manipulation were apparent when a couple of months after this data was published, the President of the European Commission's office quoted the false figure in a high level political meeting as a justification for the *"growing interest in using GMOs in the EU"*.[4]

The European lobby group also masked the steady drop in GM crop cultivation in Europe that has occurred over the last four years by counting EU member states rather than European countries as a whole. Therefore an overall steady increase was shown[5] when in fact GM crop cultivation in European countries has decreased 35% over the last four years, with a sharp drop in Romania when it joined the EU in 2007.

Only seven European countries grow GM crops - Spain, Czech Republic, Portugal, Germany, Slovakia, Romania and Poland - and to such a small extent that GM crops make up a tiny percentage of EU arable land[6] (0.36%) and agricultural land[7] (0.21%)[8] (see figures 3 and 5).

FIGURE 1

DECREASE IN GM CROP CULTIVATION EUROPEAN COUNTRIES (EU PLUS ROMANIA)

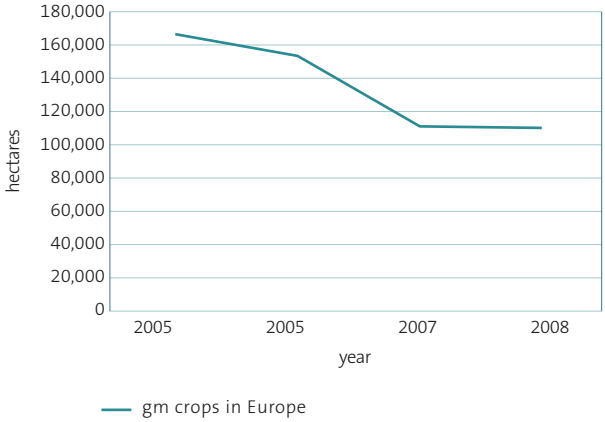


FIGURE 2

% GLOBAL ARABLE LAND

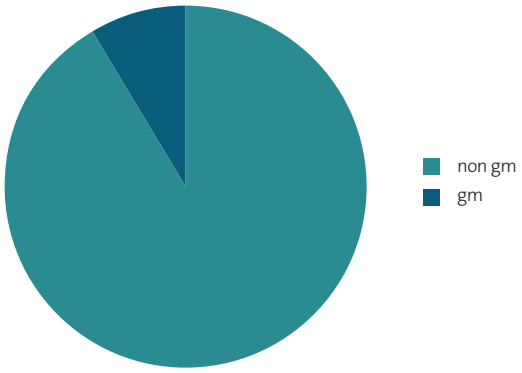
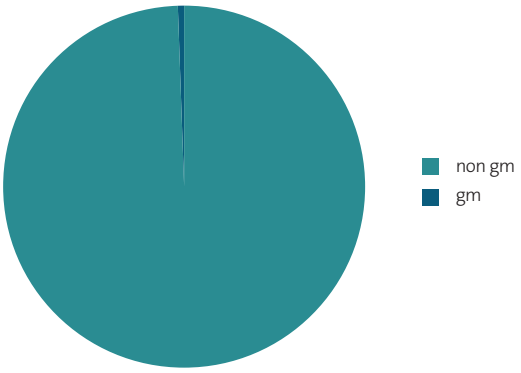


FIGURE 3

% ARABLE LAND IN THE EU 27



briefing: false industry claims of increased biotech crop cultivation in europe

cultivation of gm crops in europe: a summary

- *Only one GM crop is authorised for cultivation in the EU: Monsanto's Bt maize, MON810*
- *Total GM cultivation in the EU in 2008 dropped to 107,719 hectares compared to 110,007 hectares in 2007, a decrease of just over 2%*[9]
- *Five EU countries*[10] *have banned MON810 on environmental and health grounds, most recently France, one of the leading agricultural countries in the EU*
- *Only seven out of twenty seven countries in the EU grow MON810 (one less than in 2007): Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain*
- *In one of these – Poland – MON810 maize is grown despite a national ban. This is because whilst selling the seeds in Poland is illegal, Monsanto and the Polish Biotech Lobby Association have been giving farmers contact addresses in Germany, the Czech Republic and Slovakia where they can buy the seeds. In 2008, there were an alleged 3000 hectares of this illegal maize grown*[11]
- *The total area under cultivation in European countries has decreased year by year for the last four years by 35% overall. This is because Romania vastly decreased its cultivation of GM soy when it joined the EU in 2007 as it is not allowed under EU laws (see table 4). The decrease from 2007 to 2008 is because of France banning Monsanto's MON810 GM maize*[12]
- *None of the other European countries outside of the EU grow GMOs (such as Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, etc). Switzerland, for example, has a moratorium on growing GM crops in place until 2012. States that are at various stages of EU accession talks such as Turkey, Croatia and Macedonia also do not grow GMOs.*
- *Globally GM crops on the market incorporate essentially just two "traits" – herbicide tolerance and/or insect resistance. Insect-resistant or Bt cotton and corn produce their own built-in insecticide derived from a soil bacterium, Bacillus thuriengiensis (Bt), to protect against certain (but far from all) insect pests. Herbicide-tolerant crops are engineered to withstand direct application of an herbicide to more conveniently kill nearby weeds. Crops with herbicide tolerance predominate, occupying 82% of global biotech crop acreage in 2007.*

  Despite the GM hype built up by the industry during the food crisis, there is still not a single commercial GM crop with increased yield, drought-tolerance, salt-tolerance, enhanced nutrition or any of the other 'beneficial' traits long-promised by the industry. Disease-resistant GM crops are practically non-existent, and are grown on a tiny scale.
- *The USA grew over 50% of the world's GM crops in 2007. Excluding the USA, just 1.2% of all agricultural land in the world was under GM crops in 2007. In the EU, GM crops represent a mere 0.21% of EU agricultural land, of which nearly three-quarters (74%) of GM cultivation is localised in one single country, Spain.*[13] *After more than 10 years of commercialization, the outlook for GM crops remains grim.*

isaaa's inflated figures

Every year, the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) publishes figures on the cultivation of genetically modified (GM) crops around the world. Funded largely by the biotech industry, the ISAAA figures are frequently inflated and poorly referenced, if at all. In last year's report, for example, the ISAAA more than doubled the increase in GM crops worldwide to 22% by multiplying the actual surface area by the number of GM traits in the crops. So, for a field of one hectare growing a GM crop which is tolerant to two herbicides and secretes insecticide toxin (three traits) suddenly becomes three fields, and ISAAA therefore triples its figures for the area under GM crop cultivation.[14]

The ISAAA justifies this inflation of the figures as "more accurate[ly] account[ing]" for the use of different types of GM crops. This rather desperate and nonsensical approach is most likely because the area under crop cultivation worldwide, 114.3 million hectares, is a mere 2.4% of global agricultural land and because key markets like the European Union have resoundingly rejected GM foods. The ISAAA report is a PR strategy to pressure governments, and to convince investors, that GM crops are a success.

Each year, Friends of the Earth International publishes a nuanced, fully-referenced, fact-based assessment of GM crops around the world, designed to clear up common misconceptions about their nature and impacts. In this 2009 edition, we report on new trends and findings, particularly the failure to tackle hunger or solve the food crisis with GM crops. We also address the rise in pesticide use and lack of yield increase which is now widely observed with GM crops, and we provide an overview of the continuing failure of GM crops in Europe.

briefing: false industry claims of increased biotech crop cultivation in europe

FIGURE 4 % GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL LAND

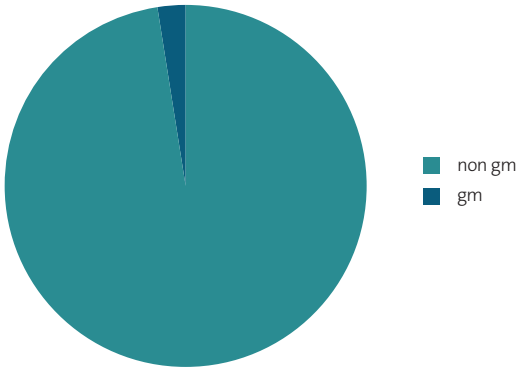


FIGURE 6 % AGRICULTURAL LAND IN 23 COUNTRIES THAT GROW GM CROPS

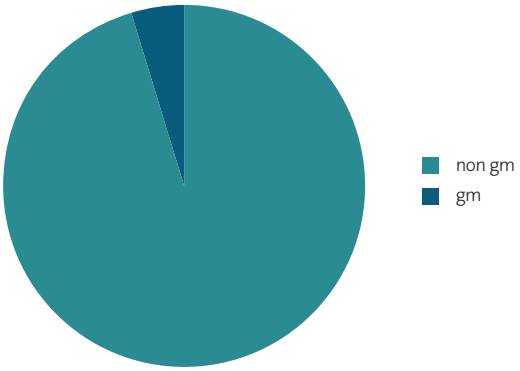


FIGURE 5 % EU AGRICULTURAL LAND

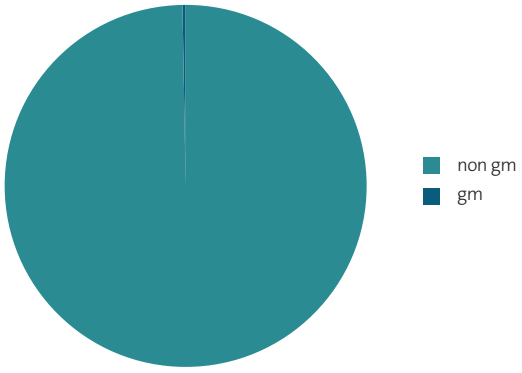


TABLE 1 GM CROPS AS A PERCENTAGE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

	TOTAL AGRICULTURAL LAND HA[15]	TOTAL GM CROPS HA[16]	GM AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Global	4,803,385,400	114,300,000	2.4%
27 EU countries' agricultural land	192,276,000	400,000	0.21%
23 global GM countries' agricultural land	2,494,141,000	114,300,000	4.5%

Source: *GM Freeze, June 2008*[17]

briefing: false industry claims of increased biotech crop cultivation in europe

FIGURE 7 % ARABLE LAND TAKEN UP BY GM AND NON GM CROPS IN THE 23 COUNTRIES WHERE GM CROPS ARE GROWN

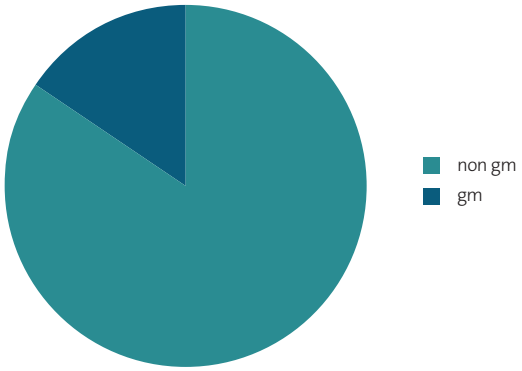


TABLE 2 GM CROPS AS A PERCENTAGE OF ARABLE LAND

	TOTAL ARABLE LAND HA[18]	TOTAL GM CROPS HA[19]	GM AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Global	1,365,069,800	114,300,000	8.4%
27 EU countries' arable land	110,849,000	400,000	0.36%
23 global GM countries' arable land	745,685,000	114,300,000	15.3%

Note: *Table 2 shows the percentage of arable[20] land under GM crops.*
Source: *GM Freeze, June 2008[21]*

TABLE 3 INDUSTRY CLAIMS: 21% INCREASE IN THE EU IN 2008, 50.6% INCREASE IN EUROPE OVER 4 YEARS*

COUNTRY/YEAR	2005	2006	2007	2008
Spain	53,225	53,667	75,148	79,269
France	492	5,000	21,147	-
Czech Republic	150	1,290	5,000	8,380
Portugal	750	1,250	4,500	4,851
Germany	400	950	2,285	3,173
Slovakia	-	30	900	1,900
Romania	110,000 (Soybean)	90,000 (Soybean)	350 (Maize)	7,146 (Maize)
Poland	-	100	320	3,000**
Total (NB ignoring France, and not counting Romania before it joined the EU in 2007)	**54,525**	**62,187**	**88,903**	**107,719**

***:** Figures presented by the European biotech lobby group EuropaBio (in hectares)*
Source: *http://www.europabio.org/documents/2008%20Cultivation%20chart.pdf.*

TABLE 4 WHAT THE FIGURES REALLY SAY: 35% DECREASE IN EUROPE OVER 4 YEARS, 2% DECREASE IN 2008 FOR THE EU

These are the figures when France and Romania are included and the totals are correctly added up. It is evident that there has been a yearly decrease in area under GM cultivation for the last four years, including a 2% decrease in 2008. The sharp decrease in figures for 2006-2007 was due to Romania stopping growing GM soy. On joining the EU in 2007, Romania had to stop growing GM soy as this was not authorised for EU member states.

COUNTRY/YEAR	2005	2006	2007*	2008**
Spain	53,225	53,667	75,148	79,269
France	492	5,000	21,147	-
Czech Republic	150	1,290	5,000	8,380
Portugal	750	1,250	4,500	4,851
Germany	400	950	2,285	3,173
Slovakia	-	30	900	1,900
Romania	110,000 (Soybean)	90,000 (Soybean)	350 (Maize)	7,146 (Maize)
Poland	-	100	320	3,000***
Total for the EU (excluding Romania prior to its accession to the EU)	**55,017**	**62,287**	**109,650**	**107,719**
Total GM crops grown in European countries (8 countries dropping to 7 in 2008)	**165,017**	**152,287**	**109,650**	**107,719**

***:** Romania joins the EU*
****:** France bans GM maize*
*****:** Illegal cultivation as GM maize banned in Poland*
Source: *http://www.europabio.org/documents/2008%20Cultivation%20chart.pdf but with all figures added up!*

briefing: false industry claims of increased biotech crop cultivation in europe

references

1 http://www.europabio.org/articles/GBE/EuropaBio%20Press%20Release%20cultivation%20figures%202008_290908.pdf
2 http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/2008/09/drop-in-genetically-modified-crops-grown-in-eu/62491.aspx
3 France banned the one GMO authorised for cultivation in the EU, Monsanto's MON 810, in 2008 on environmental and health grounds, as allowed under EU law. Until it joined the EU in 2004, Romania grew GM soy that is not authorised in the EU. Therefore on joining the EU it stopped growing GM soy.
4 http://www.foeeurope.org/GMOs/sherpas/Sherpa_meeting_10oct_conclusions.pdf
5 http://www.europabio.org/documents/2008%20Cultivation%20chart.pdf
6 Arable land includes land used for annual crops, such as soya and wheat. Not including permanent crops such as orchard and vineyards. www.nationmaster.com/graph/agr_ara_lan_hec-agriculture-arable-land-hectares taken from http://www.gmfreeze.org/uploads/GM_crops_land_area_final.pdf
7 www.nationmaster.com/graph/agr_agr_lan_sq_km-agriculture-agricultural-land-sq-km taken from http://www.gmfreeze.org/uploads/GM_crops_land_area_final.pdf
8 ISAAA, 2008. www.isaaa.org/resources/publications/briefs/37/pptslides/default.html
9 http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/2008/09/drop-in-genetically-modified-crops-grown-in-eu/62491.aspx
10 Austria, France, Greece, Hungary and Poland
11 http://www.europabio.org/articles/GBE/EuropaBio%20Press%20Release%20cultivation%20figures%202008_290908.pdf
12 http://www.europabio.org/documents/2008%20Cultivation%20chart.pdf
13 http://www.gmo-compass.org/eng/agri_biotechnology/gmo_planting/191.gm_maize_110000_hectares_under_cultivation.html
14 http://www.isaaa.org/resources/publications/briefs/37/executivesummary/default.html
15 www.nationmaster.com/graph/agr_agr_lan_sq_km-agriculture-agricultural-land-sq-km
16 ISAAA, 2008. www.isaaa.org/resources/publications/briefs/37/pptslides/default.html
17 http://www.gmfreeze.org/uploads/GM_crops_land_area_final.pdf
18 www.nationmaster.com/graph/agr_ara_lan_hec-agriculture-arable-land-hectares
19 ISAAA, 2008. www.isaaa.org/resources/publications/briefs/37/pptslides/default.html
20 Arable land includes land used for annual crops, such as soya and wheat. Not including permanent crops such as orchard and vineyards
21 http://www.gmfreeze.org/uploads/GM_crops_land_area_final.pdf

Friends of the Earth International

friends of the earth
europe

Rue Blanche 15
1050 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: 32 2 542 0180
Fax: 32 2 537 5596
info@foeeurope.org
www.foeeurope.org

for more information: helen holder
Tel: 32 2 542 0182