

Statement Prof. Dr. Richard John Roberts:

**Europe needs to endorse GMOs for the sake of the developing world.**

When the anti-GMO campaign began in Europe it was not unreasonable to be cautious and many people, including Greenpeace, made the argument that science had not yet shown that GMOs were safe. But now we have excellent scientific evidence that they are safe and if anything are likely to be safer than traditionally-bred plants. Why doesn't Greenpeace and the other anti-GMO groups admit that the science is solid and GMOs are safe? I suspect it is because the anti-GMO stance has been very good for fundraising and for gaining political power.

Moreover, while Europe does not allow the sale of GMO foods for humans, they are happy to import millions of tons of GMO crops to feed their animals. Why doesn't this provoke the animal activists to ban GMOs too if they are so dangerous? There are other examples too. Surely, it would make sense for Europeans to admit that GMOs are safe and simply say we prefer not to consume them.

For me, a major concern is that when Europeans stress how dangerous GMOs are, they spread the message to the developing world and many countries have stopped the crop improvements that are desperately needed to increase yield and introduce pest resistance. For the 800 million people who go to bed hungry every night, food is medicine. Surely, any reasonable person would want to allow the improvements that could alleviate this situation and encourage the development and planting of GMO crops that could make a big difference.

In the West the big agricultural companies have spent decades improving the few crops that dominate the food supply at home. But they have spent no time and money to do this for the crops that are often the mainstay food supply in the developing world. They could not justify the expenditure because there were no profits to be made. Now however, thanks to the newer breeding methods using modern biotechnological approaches like CRISPR, scientists in developing countries can themselves improve their local crops much more easily and achieve in a short period of time what can take decades using traditional breeding methods.

The take-home message is that it is high time for Europeans to admit that GMOs are safe and stop spreading the message that they are unsafe.