

# U.N.: Effects of bio-tech trees not known

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The United Nations says research into the effects of genetically modified trees is inconclusive despite potentially vast applications in the forestry industry.

U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization scientist Pierre Sigaud Wednesday said, "It is not possible yet to reach conclusions on the potential impacts of genetically modified forests because of the lack of reliable information."

Research is underway in 16 countries and China is the only country cultivating genetically altered trees, with 1.4 million genetically modified trees, the report said.

FAO scientists said using genetically modified trees can increase wood production, improve wood quality and resist insects, diseases and herbicides. The report said implications for industry include a reduction in processing costs of wood or chips, as well as a reduction in financial and environmental costs of pulping.

But the Rome-based international food agency's experts said using genetically modified trees included risks such as, "trans-gene instability, plantation failure, poor wood quality, development of tolerance to the modified trait by insects or disease organisms and the escape of modified genes into natural ecosystems."

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