

Airing the gene technology issue online

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According to polls, the average European consumer regards gene technology, particularly for food production, as controversial. To help alleviate consumer concern, a European project has set up a website specifically to increase information communication on safety evaluation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The website at www.gmo-compass.org, set up by the EU project 'GMO communication and safety evaluation platform' (GMO-Compass), presents information on [risk analysis](#), assessment and management incorporated in the context of a general GMO debate.

Objectives were to increase the amount of knowledge-based information in public discussion and to provide comprehensive data geared to informed consumers. Through this, GMO-Compass aimed to increase [consumer trust](#) with process transparency. Overall, a platform would be created to prompt informed discussion on 'green' technology.

A look at the website gives an idea of what GMO-Compass set out to achieve. Science-based information is presented in the form of articles and information grouped into subjects. Categories include news, grocery shopping and agri-biotechnology. Where applicable, searches are available such as for fruit and vegetables and [processed food](#) in grocery.

There are pages on safety and regulations and a comprehensive database searchable by 130 crops and then by date and event. A search through this database selecting any of the crops reveals the company, trait changed, use of crop and current status regarding authorisation.

Also available is a GMO food database covering plants, foodstuffs, additives and enzymes. Information presented includes (on enzymes) function, application, [gene technology](#) and all-important labelling.

For future use, conclusions were reached about how to maximise the impact of information dissemination. Statistics have been collected on [website users](#) and this promises to aid optimisation. GMO-Compass has set up a comprehensive website for consumer information on GMO issues at all levels, a significant step in the quest to combine the best of genetic technology with more traditional food production approaches.

Provided by CORDIS

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