

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

**Paper for Discussion: 'Genetically Modified Plants for Food Use and Human Health – An Update'.
Report from the Royal Society**

Agenda Item 3

Please see attached paper for discussion.

Please also see

- 'Genetically Modified Plants for Food Use and Human Health – An Update'. Report from the Royal Society
- Department of Health. Guidelines on the Assessment of Novel Foods and Processes. Report on Health and Social Subjects 38. London: HMSO 1991. (Sent to Members on 19 December 01)
- Department of Health. The Nutritional Assessment of Novel Foods and Processes. Report on Health and Social Subjects 44. London: HMSO 1993. (Sent to Members on 19 December 01)
- Department of Health. Guidelines on the Nutritional Assessment of Infant Formulas. Report on Health and Social Subjects 47. London: HMSO 1996. (Sent to Members on 19 December 01)

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Genetically Modified Plants for Food Use and Human Health – An Update. Report from the Royal Society

BACKGROUND

1. “In 1998 the Royal Society published a report entitled, “Genetically Modified Plants for Food Use”, which concluded that the use of genetically modified (GM) plants had the potential to offer benefits in agricultural practice, food quality, nutrition and health, but that there were several aspects of GM technology that required further consideration.”
2. A group of experts were appointed by the Royal Society to provide an update, based on research since 1998. This update, which is enclosed for your consideration, “focuses on the effects that GM foods might have on human health and the use of the principle of substantial equivalence in GM food safety testing”.

CURRENT POSITION

3. Despite the potential application of GM technology to improve the nutritional quality of crops, “in the commercial market at present there are no GM foods that are modified to enhance nutrition”.
4. The European Commission’s Scientific Committee for Food have issued guidelines on the nutritional assessment, as part of a safety assessment of GM foods.
5. The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) are currently considering the “labelling of novel foods that provides nutritional information and guidance for vulnerable groups” (Vulnerable groups: infants, children, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly and those with chronic disease.)
6. The Report states that “products that are designed to be consumed as a single food over extended periods of time by those who are especially vulnerable should be investigated most rigorously. These include infant formulas and follow-on foods...To date no GM foods for use in infant products have been submitted for approval, but it is expected that approval of such foods would be referred via the ACNFP to the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN)”.
7. The Report recommends that “the UK Government should review the enforcement of the regulations on infant foods and GM foods to ensure these regulations are complementary” and that “the European Commission should consider the use of novel and GM foods in infant foods as part of its review of Directive 91/321/EEC that covers infant formulas and follow-on foods”.

8. **Members are invited to comment on whether the draft risk assessment framework for evaluation of evidence is adequate to cover the eventualities suggested in the Royal Society Report.**

**SACN Secretariat
March 02**