



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Required Report - public distribution

**Date:** 7/26/2006

**GAIN Report Number:** UK6026

## United Kingdom

### Biotechnology

## UK calls for comments on coexistence of biotech and other crops

### 2006

**Approved by:**

Besa L. Kotati  
U.S. Embassy

**Prepared by:**

Jennifer Wilson

---

**Report Highlights:**

The UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Ministry of Agriculture) has called for public comments on proposals for the coexistence of biotech, conventional, and organic crops. The public comment period opened on July 20, 2006 and will close on October 20, 2006.

---

Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
London [UK1]  
[UK]

## Latest Development

The UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has announced a public comment period on proposals for managing the coexistence of biotech, conventional, and organic crops. The proposals focus on the specific coexistence measures needed for crops of corn, sugar beet, potato and oilseed rape. The consultation asks for interested parties to respond by October 20, 2006. The consultation documents can be found at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/gmnongm-coexist/index.htm>

## Summary of Main Points

Under European Union (EU) legislation, a biotech crop can only be approved for commercial use if a specific risk assessment confirms that it is safe for human health and the environment. Despite the growing of approved biotech crops in other EU countries, no commercial cultivation is expected in the UK before 2009, at the earliest.

If biotech crops (with the right characteristics for the UK climate) should gain EU approval, the UK government wants a thoroughly researched framework of practical measures to ensure that biotech and non-biotech production can coexist, but remain separate. The launch of this consultation process is part of a process to develop that framework.

From a regulatory standpoint, the key benchmark for distinguishing biotech and non-biotech produce is the 0.9% threshold for adventitious biotech presence adopted by the EU (products with a presence above this level must be labeled). Defra is seeking comments on a proposed coexistence regime for England that would aim to minimize any unwanted biotech presence in non-biotech crops so that it is below 0.9%.

This paper relates to England only. Coexistence is a sensitive issue that local governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland must address and come up with a practical policy for their region. They will be issuing their own stakeholder consultation papers in due course.

The consultation raises specific issues:

- whether special arrangements should apply in the case of coexistence between biotech and organic crops
- options for providing redress for possible financial losses by non-biotech farmers due to biotech crop cultivation
- the arguments for and against a public biotech crop register
- guidance on voluntary biotech-free zones

## Media Reports

The launch of this consultation was widely covered by the media. Statements were provided to the press by the National Farmers' Union, the Agricultural Biotechnology Council and Supply Chain Initiative on Modified Agricultural Crops. Leading scientists, NGOs and consumer groups have also taken the opportunity to provide their stance ahead of the consultation period deadline. There is likely to be further media attention following the close of the consultation period as Defra moves to draft regulations to enforce the final proposals.