

MEDIA RELEASE

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Media are welcome to attend and prearranged interviews are encouraged.

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LATEST ON GMOs IN HORTICULTURE

Delegates at this week's International Horticulture Congress will hear of the latest work with genetically modified fruit and vegetables from international and Australian specialists, including Em Prof Marc Van Montagu, World Food Prize Laureate (2013) and co-discoverer of the transformation technology used worldwide to produce genetically engineered plants.

There will be over 3000 delegates from more than 100 countries who will attend the International Horticulture Congress (IHC2014) – the world premier horticulture event - in Brisbane from 17-22 August at the Brisbane Exhibition and Convention Centre.

Janet Carpenter, who works on agricultural policy issues related to genetically engineered crops, will present the findings of a series of literature reviews in which she has taken an evidence-based approach to questions about the socio-economic and biodiversity impacts of currently commercialized GM crops.

“After eighteen years of experience with commercial scale adoption, the accumulated evidence on the impacts and safety of GM crops is extensive,” says Janet.

“Farmer surveys indicate that with few exceptions that are primarily limited to the early years of adoption in specific geographies, GM crops have benefited farmers, with the greatest benefits, especially in terms of increased yields, for farmers in developing countries.

“With respect to biodiversity, currently commercialized GM crops have reduced the impacts of agriculture on biodiversity through increased adoption of conservation tillage practices, reduction of insecticide use and use of more environmentally benign herbicides and increasing yields to alleviate pressure to convert additional land into agricultural use.

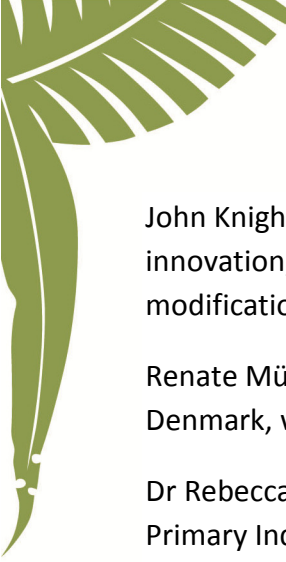
“Broad socio-economic benefits of currently commercialized GM Crops include improvements in health, education, debt repayment, maternal care services and food security,” she says.

(NB: Information on the session on GMOs in horticulture is [here](#).)

Other speakers making presentations on GMOs and vegetables include:

Dr Dennis Gonsalves, former director of the USDA Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center, who led the development of the virus-resistant transgenic papaya that saved the Hawaiian papaya industry, is addressing the plenary forum “GMOs in Horticulture: Past, Present and Future”, with Australia's Dr Gary Fitt, Director of the CSIRO Biosecurity Flagship and with World Food Prize winner Em Prof Van Montagu.

Dr Bart Panis, Senior Scientist for banana conservation at Bioversity International, co-developed the world's first transgenic banana. His address is on “GMOs in Horticulture - Exciting Opportunities or Dead End: A Case Study on Banana.”



John Knight, Professor in Marketing at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand where he teaches innovation, new product development and branding, will address the market resistance to genetic modification in his presentation “GM Crops and Damage to Country Image: Much Ado About Nothing?”

Renate Müller, Professor of Floriculture and Translational Plant Science at Copenhagen University, Denmark, will address “New Developments in GMO Science - From Gene Function to Application.”

Dr Rebecca Ford from The University of Melbourne is currently a Science Executive member of the Primary Industries Climate Change Centre and her address is titled “Exploring the Dichotomies Between GMO Regulation and Food Equity in Developing Regions.”

Dr Peter Kearns, from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Environment, Health and Safety Division, works on promoting international harmonisation in the regulation of biotechnology, nanotechnology, as well as other emerging and converging technologies. His address is “Biotechnology and Biosafety Activities at OECD.”

Dr Craig Cormick is a social researcher and science communicator/educator. He has worked for the Innovation Department and CSIRO, and is widely published on drivers of attitudes towards new technologies. His address is “What do the Public Really, Really Think About GMOs?”

Jeff Stein serves as the Asia Coordinator and Biosafety Advisor for the USAID funded Program for Biosafety Systems. His address is “Regulatory & Biosafety Considerations for Bioengineered Crop Plants.”

In addition to presentations on particular fruits, vegetables, nuts and berries, more general issues include:

- The place of horticulture in world food production
- Human health effects of fruits, vegetables, nuts and berries
- The future of indigenous vegetables and their role in the battle against malnutrition and disease
- Traditional and modern knowledge of medicinal and aromatic plants
- Functional & biofortified food in horticulture
- Mechanisation, precision horticulture and robotics
- Connections between nature, plants, landscapes and human health