



Rt. Hon. Owen Paterson MP  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Defra,  
Nobel House, 17 Smith Square,  
London, SW1P 3JR, UK

28 March 2013

Dear Mr Paterson,

I write to you on behalf of several farmers organisations and the Public Research and Regulation Initiative (PRRI). PRRI is a world-wide initiative of public sector scientists active in modern biotechnology for the common good. One of PRRI's main aims is to bring more science to the international debate on biotechnology. PRRI works closely with several UK institutes, and several UK public sector scientists are active members of PRRI. More information about PRRI and its members can be found on [www.ppri.net](http://www.ppri.net).

In 2011, PRRI has teamed up with farmers organisations that support the freedom for farmers to choose the crops best suited to their needs, including GM crops. The main objective of this farmers – scientists network is to exchange information with the goal of strengthening the voice of farmers and science in the debate on GM crops. Participants in the network include large farmers organisations such as the National Farmers Union (NFU) in the UK, as well as farmers organisations and farmers from all over Europe (see [www.greenbiotech.eu](http://www.greenbiotech.eu)).

PRRI and the farmers organisations below offer their whole-hearted support to your comments at the 2013 Oxford Farming Conference and your recent comments at the NFU conference, supporting access to new technologies, including GM crops, for farmers. We also appreciate your observation on the importance of considering respected scientific opinion showing that the GM crops that are approved to date pose no greater risk than conventional crops.

Through the network, we hear first hand from farmers of their positive experiences growing GM maize, for example in Spain and Portugal. We have also heard of the devastating consequences for Romanian farmers once they were no longer allowed to grow GM soybean following accession to the European Union in 2007, and of the difficulties for European livestock farmers as a result of the dysfunctional EU approval process. We also hear from farmers their enthusiasm for crops such as GM sugar beet following the rapid adoption of this crop in the US and their excitement over the potential of new crops such as late blight-resistant potato. Your work towards ensuring that farmers have all the tools that they need, including GM crops, to produce food in the most efficient and sustainable way is recognised and deeply appreciated.

On behalf of: AgroBiotechRom (Romania,), Asociación Agraria Jóvenes Agricultores (ASAJA, Spain), La Asociación Española de Productores de Vacuno de Carne (ASOPROVAC, Spain, Centro de Informação de Biotecnologia – (CIB, Portugal), InnoPlanta (Germany), FuturAgra (Italy), Ligii Asociatiilor Producatorilor Agricoli din Romania (LAPAR, Romania) National Farmers Union (UK), Conservation Agriculture Association (APOSOLO, Portugal), PRRI, as well as organisations and research institutes that express support after this letter was sent (see: <http://www.ppri.net/ppri-and-farmers-organisations-express-support-for-uk-secretary-of-state/>),

Yours sincerely,

Em. Prof. Marc Van Montagu , Chairman of the Public Research and Regulation Initiative (PRRI)