



## EUROPE - NEWS SCAN

### Tesco CEO Signals Support for GM Products - 2009/02

Tesco Chief Executive Officer Sir Terry Leahy spoke at the annual City Food Lecture and indicated that the retailer is willing to back genetically modified foods (GMO's), noting that consumer attitudes have changed and that GM products could play an important role in addressing the world's global food crisis, a sentiment echoed by fellow speaker Professor Lord Krebs, former Chairman of the UK Food Standards Agency.

Mr. Leahy, head of Britain's largest food retailer, argued that consumers, government and the media have not paid careful enough attention to scientific evidence, but believes that new research and rising food insecurity will encourage more and more Europeans to view GM products with less fear and skepticism, and more as a vital tool that will play an important role in feeding the world. However, Mr. Leahy acknowledged that there remains considerable controversy over the long-term safety of GM crops and their ability to deliver enhanced yields and nutrition.

The UK's National Farmers Union president, Peter Kendall, also spoke at the lecture and added his concern that strict rules for GM production in Europe could provide a competitive advantage to countries like the US, Canada, and Japan - where GM products are more widely accepted – with the result that Europe's GM industry would be exported to other parts of the world.

Some analysts believe that Europe will, over time, increasingly accept GM crops, in part because of rising food and feed prices, and in part because European industry wants to develop its own industry in order to take advantage of the global market for agricultural biotechnology, which is forecast to be worth \$50 billion within the next two decades.

The opinions expressed during the lecture suggest that increasing numbers of Europe's key decision-makers may be willing to relax restrictions on the use of GMO products, a development that would be welcome to Alberta's canola and honey producers, whose export opportunities have been restricted in the EU.

Source: Hills, Sarah. "Tesco boss hints at GM backing," *Food and Drink Europe*, February 11, 2009. <http://www.foodanddrinkeurope.com/Retail/Tesco-boss-hints-at-GM-backing>