

ISAAA Report Finds that Global Adoption of Biotech crops Continues to Rise

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SUMMARY

Farmers around the world continue to enthusiastically embrace genetically engineered (GE) crops according to the ISAAA report for 2008.

After a dozen years of commercialization, the global adoption of biotech crops continues to rise with new countries realizing the benefits, according to a report released today by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA). In 2008, biotech crop area **grew 9.4 percent or by 10.7 million hectares (26.43 million acres) to reach 125 million hectares (309 million acres).**

A record 13.3 million farmers in 25 countries are using agricultural biotechnology. Ninety percent (12.3 million) of these are resource-poor farmers in 15 developing countries.

BACKGROUND

The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) report provides detailed biotech crop adoption statistics around the world. ISAAA has been tracking global biotech crop adoption trends since the technology's inception in 1996. The report is prepared and presented by Dr. Clive James, Chair of the ISAAA Board of Directors.

ISAAA is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to share knowledge on crop biotechnology so that the global community is more informed about the attributes and potential of the new technologies.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

- In 2008, global biotech acreage grew to 309 million acres (125 million hectares) versus 282 million acres (114.3 million hectares) in 2007.
 - This is a 26.43 million acre (10.7 million hectare) increase, an increase of 9.4 percent.
- In 2008, biotech crops were grown in 25 countries, up from 23 countries in 2007.
 - New countries growing biotech crops include the African nations of Egypt and Burkina Faso.
 - Africa is considered the “final frontier” for biotech crops as it has perhaps the greatest need and most to gain.
- More than 2 billion acres (800 million hectares) of biotech crops have been planted globally since 1996.
 - Accumulated acreage of biotech crops (for the period 1996 to 2008) exceeded 2 billion acres in 2008 for the first time.
 - It took 10 years to reach the first billion acres, but only three years to reach the second billion acres.

- Of the 25 countries planting biotech crops, 15 are developing countries.
- In 2008, biotech crops were grown by 13.3 million farmers, up from 12 million in 2007.
 - 90 percent (12.3 million) are resource-poor farmers.
- By the end of the second decade of commercialization in 2015, ISAAA predicts that four billion accumulated acres will have been planted.
 - Further, ISAAA predicts 200 million hectares of biotech crops annually will be planted in a total of 40 countries.

Table 1. Global Area of Biotech Crops in 2008: by Country (Million Hectares)

Rank	Country	Area (million hectares)	Biotech Crops
1*	USA*	62.5	Soybean, maize, cotton, canola, squash, papaya, alfalfa, sugarbeet
2*	Argentina*	21.0	Soybean, maize, cotton
3*	Brazil*	15.8	Soybean, maize, cotton
4*	India*	7.6	Cotton
5*	Canada*	7.6	Canola, maize, soybean, sugarbeet
6*	China*	3.8	Cotton, tomato, poplar, petunia, papaya, sweet pepper
7*	Paraguay*	2.7	Soybean
8*	South Africa*	1.8	Maize, soybean, cotton
9*	Uruguay*	0.7	Soybean, maize
10*	Bolivia*	0.6	Soybean
11*	Philippines*	0.4	Maize
12*	Australia*	0.2	Cotton, canola, carnation
13*	Mexico*	0.1	Cotton, soybean
14*	Spain*	0.1	Maize
15	Chile	<0.1	Maize, soybean, canola
16	Colombia	<0.1	Cotton, carnation
17	Honduras	<0.1	Maize
18	Burkina Faso	<0.1	Cotton
19	Czech Republic	<0.1	Maize
20	Romania	<0.1	Maize
21	Portugal	<0.1	Maize
22	Germany	<0.1	Maize
23	Poland	<0.1	Maize
24	Slovakia	<0.1	Maize
25	Egypt	<0.1	Maize
* 14 biotech mega-countries growing 50,000 hectares, or more, of biotech crops			
Source: Clive James, 2008.			

TALKING POINTS

- The ISAAA report further illustrates what we have known all along, that biotechnology is a key component contributing to sustainable agriculture.
- More and more farmers around the world are turning to biotechnology so they can grow plants that yield more per acre and reduce production costs while being resistant to disease and insect pests.
- In the United States, more than 154 million acres of biotech crops were planted in 2008, up from 143 million acres in 2007. The primary biotech crops grown in the United States are corn, cotton, canola and soybeans, but also squash, papaya, alfalfa, and sugarbeet.
- At a time when the world is looking for science-based solutions to help feed a growing population, agricultural biotechnology is able to deliver heartier crops that produce more food, often in areas with less-than-perfect growing conditions.
- Ag biotechnology also has environmental benefits because biotech crop varieties require less cultivation and fewer pesticide applications, thereby saving fuel and reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions into the air. This also improves soil health and water retention.
- The future of agricultural biotechnology is encouraging and promising as adoption rates continue to rise, especially as we learn about the promises of next generation crops.
 - In the future, biotech crops will have resistance to additional diseases and increased tolerance for environmental stresses like drought and flooding.
 - New developments such as nitrogen efficiency will further increase the yield potential of the world's crop acreage, despite increasing pressure on natural resources.
 - We'll also see increased demand for biotech foods that have been nutritionally enhanced or engineered to help combat human disease.
 - Agricultural biotechnology is helping to meet tomorrow's challenges today in agriculture, food and energy production.
- The findings of this report prove that the United States and countries around the world are turning to science and technology to meet today's challenges in agriculture, and food and energy production.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) report, *Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops: 2008* and accompanying materials are posted at www.isaaa.org.