


The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) has found the land dedicated to genetically modified (GM) crops rose 8% in the year to October 2011. 

The study found GM or 'biotech' crops reached 160 million hectares over the period, while there has been a 94-fold increase on hectareage from the 1.7 million hectares recorded in 1996.

The report also found that between 1996 and 2011 more than 1.25 billion hectares of biotech crops were planted and re-planted, which is more 25% greater than the land mass of the U.S. or China.

"Of the 29 countries planting biotech crops in 2011, it is noteworthy that 19 were developing and 10 were industrial countries," the ISAAA said in a release.

"Developing countries grew close to 50% (49.875%) of global biotech crops in 2011 and for the first time are expected to exceed industrial countries hectareage in 2012.

"This is contrary to the prediction of critics who, prior to the commercialization of the technology in 1996, prematurely declared that biotech crops were only for industrial countries and would never be accepted and adopted by developing countries."

The leading GM producer was the U.S. with 69 million ha, followed by Brazil (30.3 million ha), Argentina (23.7 million ha), India (10.6 million ha), Canada (10.4 million ha) and Paraguay (2.8 million ha).

Other Southern Hemisphere producers to feature on the list included South Africa (2.3 million ha), Uruguay (1.3 million ha), Bolivia (900,000 ha), Australia (700,000 ha) and Chile (<100,000 ha).

Crops featured on the list included maize, soybeans, cotton, canola, sugarbeets, alfalfa, papayas, squash, poplars, sweet peppers and potatoes.

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