

# FAO Biotechnology Forum

## Facilitating Science-Based Information Exchange

The FAO Biotechnology Forum is an e-mail based forum established in 2000 to provide quality balanced information about agricultural biotechnologies for food and agriculture in developing countries and to make a neutral platform available for all interested stakeholders to openly exchange views and experiences on this subject. It covers the crop, forestry, livestock, fisheries and agro-industry sectors as well as the broad range of tools included under the general term 'biotechnology', one of which (genetic modification) has been at the centre of a highly-polarized debate in recent years.

From 2000 to 2008, the Forum has hosted 15 moderated e-mail conferences, each one focusing on a particular theme (e.g. biotechnologies for bioenergy production in developing countries) and normally lasting 4-5 weeks. Two key documents are produced for each conference: a peer-reviewed Background Document (published before the conference) and a Summary Document (summarizing the conference's debate, written after the conference).

The Forum has currently about 3 000 members worldwide. When a new conference is about to begin, they receive the Background Document and are invited to subscribe. In the conferences held so far, over 1 300 e-mail messages have been posted, coming roughly 50:50 from participants living in developing and developed countries respectively. The messages have come from about 500 different people living in 79 different countries.

The Forum brings people together from different walks of life. About one third of messages have come from people working in universities; one third from people in national or international research institutes/organizations; and one third from people who work for NGOs, as independent consultants, government ministries/bodies, the private sector, the UN, farmers organizations or development agencies.



*Providing quality science-based information on agricultural biotechnologies*



*Covering animals, crops, forestry, fisheries and agro-industry*



*Learning from each other*



*Sharing knowledge among different stakeholders*

### Sharing outputs and a recent initiative

- The Forum is e-mail based, although all e-mail messages posted and key documents written are also provided on the Forum website. The Background and Summary documents have also been disseminated in hard-copy format, through four FAO books.
- The latest e-mail conference was entitled "The role of agricultural biotechnologies for production of bioenergy in developing countries". One of the major topics discussed was the potential benefit for small-scale farmers of applying biotechnologies for bioenergy production.

For information:  
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[www.fao.org/biotech/forum.asp](http://www.fao.org/biotech/forum.asp)

The Biotechnology Forum is coordinated by the  
**FAO Research and Extension Division (NRR)**  
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