

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF BIOTECHNOLOGY/GENETIC CROPS IN FOOD SECURITY?

My name is Kathryn James, I have recently started a PhD student at Lancaster University (UK). My working background is rural and agricultural based having worked in both Europe and the UK in arable and dairy farming. Academically I completed a Masters at Manchester University in Development Management looking at the issues of **food security and genetic crops**. I have returned to this issue for my current research **I am looking at biotechnology, regulation and the role of the multinational companies with a specific focus on developing countries**.

I have been following the debates on the forum over the last six months and the complexities of people lives are clear. The role of food within people's lives is also complex; it has many aspects from basic principles of livelihood strategies, to community cohesiveness, wider cultural roles and economic importance. Adding to these, the layers of international organisations and the influence of multinational companies, the role of future needs for peoples and countries becomes even less clear. Increasingly the **role of biotechnology has been placed at the centre of any discussion of future food security**, more recently added to this is **its role in alleviation of climate change in relation to higher yields on less land**. However, **this rhetoric is not proven**, in addition the majority of the research and development for genetic crops has been based in developed countries and on commercial cash crops with **little discussion on smallholder/ local community needs and production**.

For this part of my PhD I am researching the **reach and rhetoric of multinational companies in relation to the slow spread of genetic crops**. These are powerful organisations that have influence on all our lives, however, my research at present centres on **how multinationals think they will reach the poorest farmers with high technology products and what discourses are used to persuade small-scale farmers of the benefits to them and their community**. There has been a lot of discussion on the forum on the voice of the smallholder farmer, how their voices are sometimes not heard and their needs are often ignored. I would like to know **how much information small-scale farmers have access to with regard to biotechnology in general, who provides with information and what form of discourses it takes and ultimately are they given a choice of what they produce?**

Therefore, I would like to request the Forum to:

1. **Share examples** of where smallholder farmers use genetically modified crops and the advantages and disadvantages they have noticed in relation to conventional crops
2. **Share examples** of where multinational companies/ governments and others have promoted their genetic crops to small-scale farmers, specifically thinking of promises of higher yields and greater access to new markets
3. **Provide contact details** of NGOs other organisations or people who are aware or engaged in similar studies to contact and share information

Many thanks for your time and support, I am happy to answer any questions on the Forum or individually. I look forward to the debate and hope to engage in future

debates related to the area of biotechnology, food sovereignty, regulation and multinational influence.

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