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Birds, Bugs, and Biotechnology—Where Do We Go From Here?

Intensive farming in Europe has had seriously damaging effects on biodiversity over the past 40 years. Biotechnology in agriculture may be leading toward even more intensive farming and greater reliance on chemicals, which could have a greater impact on farmland biodiversity than previous "conventional" systems. There is an urgent need to reappraise the ecological and environmental impacts of genetically modified (GM) herbicide-tolerant and GM insect-resistant crop systems currently available to the agricultural industry, in order to determine whether they are more or less sustainable than what we have had in the past. This has become an important issue in Europe, and has reopened the debate on how agriculture could become more sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Biotechnology could contribute toward agricultural sustainability whilst maintaining yield and agronomic viability, but only if the biotechnology industry, regulators, and policy makers revise their approach to research and strategy. An agenda for a different approach toward targeting agbiotech research and strategy is presented.