

Biotech Use In Conference Spotlight

ain went ballistic," he said. The British Royal Society trashed the results and the British tabloids "had a field day," Ferber said.

There has been no evidence that using biotechnology in crops has caused any plant, animal, or human any harm. But no evidence on potential dangers, Ferber cautioned, is not the same as clear evidence that a genetically modified crop is safe.

Tests are taken up mostly by the companies that produce the products themselves and data is simply "OK'd" by federal agencies. But the work companies do to test products uses the most reliable scientific methods. "No one has any idea on how to do it any better," Ferber said.

The risk is there. And, Ferber said, who bears the burden of proof?

It's important to put that risk in perspective.

But some important potential environmental and other risks over biotechnology in crops include the following:

- Crop kills on nonpest insects. What effect in the long term will biotech crops have on possible insect "bystanders"?

- Superweeds. Because of using biotech, the technology could result in outbreaks of highly aggressive, hard-to-control giant weeds that could literally take over fields, noted Ferber.

- Bt and other technological resistance. It is important to manage that resistance.

The jury is still out on most of these risks, he noted.

But one positive development is the use of Bt to fight corn rootworm — it would significantly reduce traditional chemical insecticide use, at least for a short time.

Another bright development is the genetically modified papaya tree, the second biggest crop in Hawaii after sugar cane. In the early '90s, the crop was literally wiped out by a virus. But a new genetically modified type has literally turned the tables on the disease.

An important genetically modified crop development is the new golden rice. About 400 million people in the world lack enough Vitamin A. Ferber noted that half a million children in the world go blind each year because of the lack of Vitamin A. The genetically engineered rice has enough Vitamin A to stop the deficiency.

But the "antibiotech" people remain active. Ferber pointed out that the 4th annual "Biodevastation 2000" Conference is scheduled for Boston, Ma., March 24-30. The promoters are looking at the issues of what they consider dangerous developments in technology.

For those who want to adopt genetically modified crops, it's important to remember that "no technology is a panacea," Ferber said. "And no technology is a 'mad force of genetic darkness.' I hope we will use this wisely."

At the conference, Helen Bishop MacDonald, director of nutrition at Dairy Farmers of Canada, noted that an ideal diet

would consist of meat/fish/poultry combined with regular dairy products and fruits and vegetables. She urged those who want to eat healthily to avoid fried foods and "foods with hydrogenated vegetable oil," foods containing potentially cancer-causing substances. The hydrogenated oils are "insidious killers in the American diet," she said.

MacDonald refuted the findings of years past to dispel dairy diet "misinformation." Milk is an essential, crucial supplier of lots of other essential nutrients, besides calcium. Milk itself prevents osteoporosis, reduces hypertension, works to help prevent colon cancer, cuts kidney stones, and butterfat contains a fatty acid shown to reduce the possibilities of developing many types of cancer.

Today's children get barely half of the required calcium in their diets, she noted.

Julie Funk, extension food safety specialist with North Carolina Extension Service, noted

the challenges and difficulties in coming up with accurate methods to test for salmonella in hogs.

According to several university studies, all-in, all-out, single-source, dedicated-flow systems alone are insufficient to place a check on salmonella in a swine herd. With some types of operations, it has become hard to design a competent, reliable risk factor study, though work proceeds.

David Pyburn, director of veterinary science for the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC), commented on the pork checkoff referendum to take place.

He said that he "hoped it doesn't take time away from real issues" facing the industry.

Pyburn reviewed the NPPC Pork Quality Assurance Level III initiatives and how programs have been implemented to assure pork food safety from the farm to the packer. He reviewed the good production practices in place to ensure quality pork, which is "by far the most consumed meat worldwide."

An NPPC Pork Quality and Safety Summit is scheduled July 11-12 in Des Moines, Iowa.

Breeding Complete

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Mathie, ranks third at +3.0. Keeping it all in the family, 7HO4457 Saber, whose grandam is also Mathie's dam, ranks second for Productive Life at +3.2. Saber added nearly 300 to his proof and climbed +136 pounds of milk and +41 TPI points. Needless to say, this family's results speak for themselves.

One of Select's nine new Holstein sires is 7HO5375 Marshall, a Program for Genetic Advancement (PGA) graduate that is nearly +3,000 for milk at +2,733M. This Bellwood from an Elton is over +1.50 for all HA composite scores and is +2.20 for type. "Marshall sires tremendous frames, outstanding feet and legs and well attached udders," said Long. "He ranks third at Select for TPI at +1604 and will be used as a sire for sons for the PGA." An added bonus is his 8% calving ease.

"7HO5315 Sam sires what every dairy producer wants, high volumes of milk from great udders," said Long. "Sam sires similar type to his father, Elton, and many records throughout Sam's maternal pedigree are over 33,000M up to 43,130M. Sam is outstanding for udder cleft (+3.08) and teat placement (+3.38) which puts him in the top 10 at Select for both traits."

Tenacity Defined

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.)—When Frank Perdue introduced his chickens into the New York metropolitan market in the early 1970s, he spent about six months there in an intensive market survey study interviewing butchers.

He jotted notes from interviews on yellow legal pads and filled over twenty of them. This equaled at least 800 pages of marketing data. It wasn't until he got home that he discovered that he left one note pad in a telephone booth at La Guardia Airport.

Unwilling to accept the fact that he would never again see the missing pad and informed that it was probably in the trash, Frank located the landfill where it had been taken and retrieved it.

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