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(unofficial translation)

The Swedish Minister for Development Cooperation, Gunilla Carlsson, feels that the resistance to genetically modified crops is a big problem. Last Wednesday she gathered researchers and authorities to discuss how plant breeding and genetically modified crops can assist developing countries in securing the food supply.

Development assistance requires genetically modified crops (GMO)

The European resistance to genetically modified crops is opposing the work of providing aid, says Gunilla Carlsson, Minister for Development Cooperation.

On the initiative of the Minister, researchers, authority and business community representatives were gathered last Wednesday (18th August 2010) at the Campus of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences at Alnarp in order to discuss how plant breeding and genetically modified crops can contribute to secure the food supply in developing countries.

Lack of information

The lack of correct information and the ill-founded resistance against genetically modified crops in Europe was dealt with to a great extent. Monsanto's representative, Mr Mattias Zetterstrand, called for an independent "bank of information" in order to be able to obstruct myths around genetically modified crops.

Mr Torbjörn Fagerström, Professor at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, began his speech by saying that 'the opinion that genetically modified crops are a hazard to health and the environment has no scientific bearing'. Everybody at the seminar seemed to agree.

The Minister is hopeful that there will be frequent meetings with the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in the future and she is of the opinion that the gene technology is important in the struggle against malnutrition in the world.

-The important thing for me has been to see what we can do, among other things with assistance from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, to ensure that we have the local perspective on breeding and innovations including the possible support of genetically modified crops.

-It is not about producing more in *Skåne* (province in southern Sweden) in order to be able to sell a little to *Norrland* (the northern part of Sweden) and the main part to countries south of Sahara but instead to create better conditions for e.g. crops resistant to drought, and to cultivate more locally.

Rigid attitude

According to Gunilla Carlsson, the European Union's attitude to agriculture and genetically modified crops is far too rigid and it affects the possibilities to discuss development with developing countries.

-Today it feels as if that question is put under taboo

-We, who are providing a lot of aid and the European Union being the biggest development agent in the world, do not mention this at all. And we know that the malnutrition today is enormous and there will be more young people and children born and growing up in e.g. Africa.

Sweden can benefit from genetically modified crops

Also Sweden has a lot to gain in growing genetically modified crops, says Professor Torbjörn Fagerström. He has been assigned by the Ministry of Finance to study socio-economic profits when growing genetically modified crops and preliminary figures show that Sweden loses hundreds of millions of Krona per year only in the consumption and production value chain. Furthermore, growing genetically modified crops would contribute to vast environmental benefits.

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