

From the President

Scientific and commercial development in rapeseed have flourished since the Congress in Saskatoon in 1991 and the successful GCIRC Technical Meeting in Copenhagen in 1993. Further confirmation of the nutritional benefits of rapeseed oil has led to increased consumption, while the non-food potential is expanding with the development of pharmaceutical uses, biodiesel and other industrial outlets.

The continuing exploitation of genetic engineering and other biotechnological techniques in the Brassicae spp is now moving forward rapidly to the market place and a number of very promising cultivars are on the verge of commercialisation. The progression through small field trial controlled releases for research and development purposes towards application to national Competent Authorities for approval for marketing has perhaps taken longer than was originally anticipated. However, the experience of knowledge, accumulated both over time and from the now wide range of environments where field trials have been conducted, has provided greater confidence in the essential assessment of hazard and risk. The new technologies offer great potential benefits, but it is vital that society as a whole is assured that full and proper consideration has been given to the implications of release of genetically modified crop cultivars of rapeseed, and that every step has been taken to minimise risk to the environment and human health. Controlled field trial releases have been conducted for a number of traits :

- herbicide tolerance
- fungal disease resistance
- insect resistance
- modification of oil or protein composition
- male sterility and male fertility restoration.

In north America, both the United States agencies and the Canadian authorities have taken major steps towards clearance for commercialisation. The European Union is currently in the final stages of consideration of an application to market a hybrid oilseed rape derived through genetic engineering and we await the outcome of their deliberations with great interest. Substantial work has been conducted with OECD towards the

commercialisation of agricultural products derived through modern technology to address the issues of international trading in seeds, information requirements and environmental safety. All these stages take time, but are essential to ensure confidence from the eventual consumers and for the longer term development of rapeseed.

The 1995 Congress in Cambridge, United Kingdom, will provide a forum to discuss these and all the other issues of common interest. The breadth of the programme demonstrates the extensive range of interests involved.

- international policies and markets
- breeding and biotechnology
- agronomy and physiology
- animal/human nutrition and chemistry
- plant protection
- industrial developments.

These issues will be covered in both theatre and poster presentations, and within a crowded programme we have attempted to create space and time for discussion.

The 1995 Congress provides an opportunity to meet old friends, to make new friends and to exchange views on all aspects of rapeseed. Cambridge itself provides further attractions and diversions, and we look forward to meeting you in July.

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