

From the President

Since the publication of the twelfth GCIRC Bulletin in April 1996 the rapeseed industry has continued to develop rapidly. Oilseed rape/canola, as a crop whose agronomic and management requirements are widely understood, offers a practical and immediate route for the application of innovative biotechnology.

The introduction of valuable traits through genetic modification into an established world-wide commodity crop offers a low risk route towards commercialisation. This has been clearly demonstrated by the rapid up-take of herbicide tolerant canola in Canada. It is also encouraging that the European Community has now approved some marketing consents relating to rapeseed, although there remains difficulties, particularly with consumers and ecologists. These concerns will have to be addressed in a balanced and sensitive manner before the full potential of biotechnology can be achieved and this should also facilitate wide commercialisation. Herbicide tolerance has so far led the way, but modifications of oil composition to enhance its value to end-users or to widen market potential are also moving from a research and development phase towards commercialisation. Traits such as the introduction of specific enzymes to enhance the feeding value of rapeseed meal will also widen the potential of the crop while enhancement of its agronomic characteristics through hybrids, disease resistance and resistance to pod shatter will be of real value to the grower.

GCIRC is also in a healthy state. Recent years have seen a growth in the number of countries participating and a steady increase in the number of subscribing individual members. Through the publication of the Bulletin and the Congress Proceedings, GCIRC provides excellent up-dates and reviews of current research while through its meetings it fosters collaboration and co-operation across all sectors. The forthcoming Technical Meeting in Göttingen, with its focus on the Production and Potential of Rapeseed in the Countries of Eastern Europe and the Product Quality Status of Rapeseed Oil and Meal, as well as the meetings of the Technical Committees, promises to be a valuable event. Looking forward to the 1999 Congress in Canberra there

is no doubt that current rate of research, development and commercialisation of new technological advances in rapeseed will ensure a full programme of innovative and vibrant papers.

I have been privileged to serve as President of GCIRC over such an exciting period. The strength of GCIRC rests in its membership and in the excellent support and day-to-day management provided by André Pouzet and the Secretariat. I will hand over these responsibilities in full confidence that GCIRC will thrive and continue to meet its primary objectives of fostering communication, collaboration and co-operation.

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