

Mr Richard Lochhead  
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs  
and the Environment  
Scottish Government

28<sup>th</sup> August 2015

Dear Mr Lochhead,

The Scottish Society of Crop Research [SSCR] exists to foster evidence-based knowledge transfer between the Scottish farming and research communities in order to ensure that research in Scotland is directly focused on the needs of Scottish farmers, growers and processors and to allow those farmers to access the latest and most innovative technologies; the Society comprises a broad membership of Scottish farmers, agricultural businesses, past- and present researchers.

On behalf of the Society I am writing to ask you to review and reconsider your decision, announced recently, to seek an opt-out for Scottish Agriculture on the cultivation of GM crops.

Your release to the Press cites *“no evidence of significant demand for GM”* but, whilst SSCR recognises that consumer safety and the avoidance of any environmental damage must be paramount in the appraisal of all new technologies, including GM, we would ask you, and the rest of Scottish Government, to step up to lead and inform public opinion on the safety and potential benefits of new technologies with proper, evidence-based debate rather than risk the future, global competitiveness of Scottish agriculture by hiding behind the veil of ill-informed and often sensationalist discussion in the populist press. Scotland’s potato farmers for instance would welcome the introduction of Blight-resistant varieties developed through GM technologies but recognise also that the commercial adoption of such varieties would be wholly dependent on persuading consumers of the safety and benefits such crops could bring in both the short- and longer-terms.

Scottish Government’s recently announced research funding strategy highlights the need to develop novel crops and cropping systems suitable for the challenging Scottish environment; in addition, your own discussion document, *The Future for Scottish Agriculture*, states a desire to see the *“more widespread adoption by farmers of innovative technologies and practices”* to improve performance and competitiveness.

Both priorities are directly compromised by your decision to opt-out from the commercial-scale appraisal of GM crop technologies, and there is a serious risk that Scotland’s world-leading plant science position will be significantly eroded in the longer-term.

Regulation of GM technology must be proportionate and made on the basis of scientific evidence.

SSCR supports the right of Scottish farmers and growers in having access to all new technologies, including GM, to allow them to maintain their competitiveness within European and Global markets.

SSCR also supports individual farmers' and growers' freedom to choose whether or not to adopt new technologies within their own farming systems and to meet the demands of their own individual consumers.

I strongly urge you to review your decision.

On Behalf of The Scottish Society for Crop Research

Alistair JB Redpath  
Chairman