- **Bt Cotton**

  Much has been heard about genetically engineered Bt cotton, but now it will soon be available to growers for utilization. Genetically engineered Bt cotton called "Bollgard" with resistance to lepidopteran insects will hopefully be available to growers for commercial planting in the USA in 1996. About 11,000 hectares of Bollgard brand Bt cotton will be grown during 1995/96 for seed multiplication. As reported in the last issue of THE ICAC RECORDER, Bollgard brand Bt cotton will be regulated by the US Environmental Protection Agency as a pesticide because the transgenic plant has pesticidal properties. According to Delta and Pine Land Company (D&PL), who will be marketing the Bt cotton for planting, Bollgard brand Bt cotton seed will cost US$ 34-35 compared to US$ 8-9 per hectare for non-engineered cotton seed. Large-scale benefits will be available to the majority of US cotton growers in four to five years. Once the usefulness of cotton resistant to American bollworm, tobacco budworm and other Lepidopteran insects becomes popular among US cotton growers, Bollgard brand Bt cotton might become available to growers outside the US under agreements with D&PL. However, a limitation of growing only D&PL varieties will apply. Countries where D&PL varieties are not grown must transfer the resistant gene into their own commercial varieties to utilize this technology.

- **Biotechnology Advisory Commission**

  An International Biotechnology Advisory Commission (BAC) has been established by the Stockholm Environment Institute (Address: Box 2142, S 103, 14 Stockholm, Sweden). This group will, on request, provide national authorities with impartial advice for evaluating the applicability and safety of biotechnologies. Members of the Commission are based in 11 countries around the world and, in combination, have many years of experience with scientific, economic and legal issues surrounding biotechnology research and development. The BAC is prepared to assist with the risk and benefit analyses of proposed specific introductions of genetically modified organisms through independent reviews.

  In response to specific requests, for example, how to assess a particular genetically modified organism prior to field testing, BAC will provide evaluations of the important, relevant issues. Any advice offered will be based upon background data provided by the applicant, information obtained through special sources (e.g., ad hoc Task Forces sponsored by the Commission), and the collective knowledge and experience of the members. It is intended that advice will be in a form that may be useful to regulatory authorities in their decision making.

  Recognized internationally in their respective fields, Commission Members are scientific, economic and legal experts whose judgment commands respect. This is evidenced by their extensive experience in national and international biotechnology programs. Members are based in developing and industrialized countries. They have been drawn from the public and private sectors. While an environmental focus is prominent in their backgrounds, they provide expertise in the fields of applied ecology; ecological genetics; microbial ecology; microbial biochemistry; molecular biology of plants and microorganisms; molecular genetics; entomology; genetics; marine biotechnology; plant breeding; plant pathology; international, environmental and regulatory law; and economics.

  Consistent with the formation of an independent commission, the BAC will

  1. In the first instance provide advisory services solely on an on-request basis to appropriate governmental and intergovernmental authorities responsible for the evaluation of applications of biotechnology products in developing countries. At the discretion of the Commission members, requests from other entities may be accepted;

  2. Initially focus on products currently being considered for testing in the developing world. Accordingly, genetically modified plants and microorganisms with various traits are likely to feature prominently in the first reviews, but other applications of biotechnology will be considered; and

  3. Safeguard proprietary information and respect requests for confidentiality. However, the extent of privacy requests should be considered in light of the intent for BAC recommendations to be transparent and, whenever possible, made publicly available.

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