



Academic Community Supports Plant-Made Pharmaceuticals in California

PlantPharma, August 10, 2004

URL: <http://www.pr9.net/science/conferences/1095august.html>

Drawing upon the expertise of their community of more than 120 academics, researchers, and other life sciences professionals, an online coalition of academics (<http://www.PlantPharma.org>) have refuted a report that claims biotechnology-improved rice being grown to help produce new life-saving therapeutic drugs may pose a risk to human or environmental health.

PR9.NET August 10, 2004 - "The main tactic used by the writers of the document is that they have intentionally confused risk with hazard, presenting the hazards as if they were risks," said Plantpharma.org member Wayne Parrott, professor in the Crop and Soil Sciences Department at the University of Georgia. "This report simply provides a laundry list of potential problems, giving the impression they are likely to happen, when in fact they are not."

The report, which was issued by a series of advocacy groups including Friends of the Earth, Center for Food Safety, Consumers Union, and Environment California made a number of misleading claims regarding the possible effect of biotech rice which is being used to produce therapeutic proteins for pharmaceutical use.

Among the "hazards" claimed was that pollen from the biotech rice would drift in high winds, potentially contaminating nearby crops. The truth, however, as noted by a well publicized study conducted earlier this year, is that the distance rice pollen can travel is 110 meters, just a fraction of the 25-mile standard that the pharma-rice researchers use.

Echoing sentiments from an article he published earlier this year, Plantpharma.org member and Hoover Institution Fellow Henry Miller said, "The health and environmental risks of such rice varieties are negligible — rice is self-pollinating, so genes are not readily transferred from one plant to another."

New scientific discoveries involving therapeutic proteins offer exciting and promising hope for treating a range of diseases. Doing so in an effective and appropriate manner demands an informed dialogue on such challenges as producing these therapeutic proteins safely, economically, and in quantities that can be adjusted to meet growing needs.

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About PlantPharma

PlantPharma.org is an online community dedicated to a science-based, medically-oriented public dialogue on plant-made pharmaceuticals and their potential to help combat life-threatening illnesses.

This community is a project of the International Academy of Life Sciences, a global network of universities, medical schools, and related institutions that are dedicated to education, training and research in key issues associated with the life sciences. Our PlantPharma.org project is exploring the related life sciences area of plant-made pharmaceuticals through informed dialogue and information sharing among interested stakeholders.

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