

Barking up the right GM tree? Transgenic trees could make better timber

Although genetically modified crops such as cereals and cotton continue to attract much scientific and political attention, there has been little debate about the large worldwide research effort to develop GM trees.

Trees with foreign genes added have grown in 700 field trials in at least 21 countries over the past 20 years, says Matthias Fladung of the Thünen Institute of Forest Genetics in Germany. They include dozens of deciduous and coniferous species, with most work done on eucalyptus and poplar.

GM poplar, engineered to make a natural insecticide (Bt toxin) in its leaves, is already grown on a commercial scale in China. “There is no independent assessment of transgenic poplar in China,” says Rick Meilan, who works on poplar at Purdue University in the US. “The area planted may cover thousands of hectares.”

View the original article here: [Barking up the right GM tree?](#)