

Are farmers around the world less eager to embrace crop biotechnology?

An [article](#) by Jack Kaskey on Bloomberg examined a recent [report](#) by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications documenting the status of commercially grown biotech crops in 2013, but it misrepresented several key findings. Kaskey [claimed](#) that according to ISAAA's report, "genetically modified crop plantings fell in industrialized nations for the first time since the technology was commercialized in 1996. Plantings in those countries fell about 2 percent to 81 million hectares (200 million acres) last year as Canada sowed less modified canola and Australia cut back on cotton."

Val Giddings, a geneticist and senior fellow at the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, deconstructs the lack of context in the Bloomberg report. Giddings explains that biotech crop plantings increased or held steady in eight of 10 industrial nations (USA, Canada, Australia, Spain, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia). But more importantly, "unmentioned in the story is the fact that the main reason for a decline in the rate of adoption is that key, large markets (U.S., Brazil, India for cotton, etc.) are now saturated at levels leaving little or no room for further growth."

No innovation in the history of agriculture has been more rapidly adopted than seeds improved through biotechnology. Grown in negligible amounts starting in 1984, the first commercial plantings in 1996 led to explosive growth in the years since. The cumulative total area is expected to top 4 billion acres this year. Data confirming this remarkable success story compiled by the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture were released in February of 2014, but some of the stories got critical elements wrong. We take a closer look.... It is important to note that more modest annual gains, and continued plateauing, are predicted for the next few years due to the already optimal (between 90% and 100%) adoption rates for the principal biotech crops, leaving little or no room for expansion.

Giddings points out that the report documented a hundred fold increase in area devoted to biotech improved crops from 1996 to 2013, a much more positive development compared to the findings that the Bloomberg article focused on. "This rate of adoption and market penetration has been matched by no other innovation in agriculture in history," he writes, adding:

The central claims are true, but presented in a misleading manner. The story cherry picks sound bites most easily spun in a negative light, ignoring much more profound and positive developments.

Read the full, original article: Alleged decline in GM crop plantings misses forest for trees

Additional Resources:

- ["4 billionth acre of biotech crops about to be planted,"](#) Genetic Literacy Project
- ["Top ten facts about biotech/GM crops in 2013,"](#) Crop Biotech Update (ISAAA)

- [“Infographic: 2013 Global biotech crop report,”](#) Crop Biotech Update (ISAAA)
- [“Case closed: There’s nothing wrong with genetically modified crops,”](#) International Business Times