

## China needs open debate on GMO public policy

Biosafety certificates permitting Chinese researchers to grow genetically modified rice and corn expired last week, with little indication that the Ministry of Agriculture will renew them.

In China today, scientific and environmental decision-making is fragmented and far less technocratic than is often assumed, and public and elite anxiety does seem to run high when it comes to genetic modification. But it would be careless to simply write off the situation as reflecting public, or even elite, ignorance and paranoia about food and agriculture.

Certainly, some of the discourse around GM in China is paranoid and misguided, and much like its championing of clean energy, Chinese government support for innovation could perhaps be game changing for agricultural biotechnology. But focusing exclusively on one vision of high-tech innovation — or writing off its critics as purveyors of “anti-science” (when perhaps there are legitimate reasons for concern) — could not only obscure avenues for engagement on scientific and environmental decision-making, but also overlook other, emergent innovations addressing China’s agricultural, food and environmental challenges. It’s pertinent instead to ask how more open approaches to scientific governance could transform a debate, which — as demand for food and animal feed continues to rise — has surely only just begun.

**Read the full, original article:** [GM in China: ‘Paranoia’ and public opinion](#)