Biotech and non-GMO crops may need less separation than believed to prevent 'contamination'

"Trying to figure out how far GM pollen will travel is really difficult," says study co-author Rebecca Tyson, associate professor of mathematics at UBC Okanagan.

"It is important to have accurate tools to estimate this, so that unintentional cross-pollination of GM material to non-GM crops can be minimized."

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Tyson suggests that the simplest way to minimize cross-fertilization between crops is to separate them. Up until now, the isolation distances have been somewhat haphazardly determined.

Screen Shot at PM
Rebecca Tyson

Tyson's research offers a new analytical tool which can provide a much-improved estimate of how far pollen will travel.

Along with colleagues … she developed a mathematical model of pollen dispersal by bees, based on field experiments.

"Our results suggest that separation distances of several hundred metres, proposed by some European countries, is unnecessarily large but separation by 40 metres is not sufficient," says Tyson. "Using our model, we can calculate and suggest separation sizes with better accuracy. For example, we have estimated that for a 0.9 percent cross-pollination rate, the ideal distance of separation between two crops is between 51 and 88 metres, depending on crop size and type."

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: New tool can help estimate genetically modified pollen spread

For more background on the Genetic Literacy Project, read GLP on Wikipedia