

New Zealand mulls loosening strict biotech crop rules as GMO ryegrass shows promise in field trial

While New Zealand has not yet approved the release of genetically modified crops, its agricultural research agency's principle scientist has said it is important that the science keeps options open so policy makers have strong evidence to draw on.

Over the last two years AgResearch has been working on the development of a genetically modified high metabolisable energy (HME) ryegrass that has been shown in its laboratories to grow up to 50% faster than the conventional crop.

Principal scientist Greg Bryan has also found it can store more energy for better animal growth, be more resistant to drought and produce up to 23% less methane from the dairy livestock it feeds.

Because of New Zealand's ban on GMO testing outside the lab, the field testing has taken place over the last 18 months in the United States. Bryan recently returned, reporting: "The HME ryegrass has performed well in controlled growing conditions.

"We're breeding the best novel traits into ryegrass cultivars that will best suit New Zealand growing conditions and we're also introducing genes into the plants that have simpler genetic patterns that will make future breeding programs easier."

Read full, original article: [NZ 'making progress' in GMO feed research as FSANZ plots food code changes](#)