

International appeal to scientists for help to identify the origin of unknown DNA

Exeter, United Kingdom, August 15, 2001

Dear scientist,

The recent publication of the character of the DNA insert in the genetically modified soya developed by Monsanto (Windels *et al.*, 2001. Characterisation of the Roundup Ready soybean insert. *European Food Research and Technology*, **213**, 107-112) has raised serious ambiguities regarding the nature of the NOS3' junction region.

The paper concludes that beyond the 250 bp additional fragment of the herbicide tolerance gene, CP4 EPSPS, **there is a 534 bp region of unidentified DNA** (see ANNEX). This DNA could not be identified using BLAST searches and therefore its origin is, as yet, unknown. At present, it is thought that the DNA may be rearranged soya genomic DNA or part of a large deletion of soya genomic DNA. It is also possible that this may be DNA from another organism, perhaps from an organism used in part of the genetic engineering process.

I am writing to enlist your help in identifying the origin of this unknown DNA. Can you think of any methodologies other than BLAST searches that may shed light on the origin of this DNA? Could a Southern blot of genomic DNA from a variety of organisms (including soya) followed by hybridization onto a probe specific to the unidentified DNA help identify the source of the DNA? Which organisms would be most likely to examine? How could this DNA be identified as rearranged soya DNA?

The 534 bp region of unidentified DNA (see ANNEX) can also be downloaded from the US National Center for Biotechnology Information, NCBI, Genebank, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>, accession no. AJ308515 (the unidentified DNA starts at base no. 295 and ends at 829).

I would greatly appreciate your help in this matter. I am sure you will agree it is important that the origin of this unidentified DNA is determined with the utmost urgency.

I await your response.

Yours,

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ANNEX: The 534 bp region of unidentified DNA

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1 AAGCGCATCA TGCTGGGAAA TTTTAGCGAG ATTATAAGTA TCTTCCTGGG GATCTCTGCT
61 GTTACTGGTG AATAGTGAGA CAGAGTCTTC TGAGCTCATA GGATAAAATA AATTATAATT
121 AGTAAATTTT TTAATTAAAT AAATCAATTA CTTCATAAAT AATTTTTTTTT ATAGAATATG
181 TTGACATTCT AGCCGGATAT AGAACTAATG TAAAGAAACC TTAAAAATTT TGTTTGGAAG
241 AATATGTTAT TGAAAGACAA ATCTAATTAA GTTTATCAGG GTCATTTGTT GAAGATAGGA
301 AACCTTCAGC AATTTGAATA TTAAGTAACT GCTTCTCCCA GAATGATCGG AGTTTCTCCT
361 CCTGCTATTA CATGAGCAAA AATAAAAAAT AAATAAAAGA TAAGATTAAG CTTCAACATG
421 TGAAGGAGTA GTACACTCAC CAGTGACCCT AATAGGCAAC AGCATGAAAA AAAATAAAAA
481 AGAATAAAAA TAGCATCTAC ATATAGCTTC TCGTTGTTAG AAAAACAAAA CTAT
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from:

TITLE: Characterisation of the Roundup Ready soybean insert

AUTHORS: Windels, P., Taverniers, I., Depicker, A., Van Bockstaele, E. and De Loose, M.

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