From The President

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As we approach the end of the decade, rapeseed research is becoming more technical, moving increasingly toward biotechnology and genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The rapeseed industry is being watched by the world as it is at the cutting edge of gene technology in the fields of :

· Chemical resistance/tolerance
· Disease resistance
· Insect resistance
· Higher yields, higher oil contents and higher protein levels
· Development of new products

The GMO issue is very emotive topic around the world with the focal point on the oilseeds - soybean, cottonseed and rapeseed. Debate revolves around testing, labelling and food safety issues. The scientific world seems to have little doubt that the road ahead is for GM seed and products, farmer and environmental sustainability are inescapably linked to using fewer chemicals for control of weeds, diseases and insects. World population growth combined with a finite agricultural resource of land insists that more production will be required from less area. Without GM varieties will we be able to increase production at the same rate as population growth. It is not a short term question, and despite current world inventories and price indications we need to look at how the world's demands will be met in 15 or 30 years time without the quantum leaps in seed technology possible using GM techniques. World production and consumption of rapeseed is one of the great agricultural success stories of the 80's and 90's. The millions of dollars spent on research and promotion of rapeseed has landed it squarely on the world stage for comment by all the critics. Public awareness about rapeseed as a crop is at an all time high.

The 10th International Rapeseed Congress will take place in Canberra, Australia in September 26th - 30th 1999. The Congress will reflect the new trends in research and development. Researchers from throughout the world will have an opportunity to discuss their interests and results with other scientists. The Congress has taken into consideration all of the aspects relating to developments in biotechnology, breeding techniques, analytical and nutritional considerations and new industry developments. The program will include :

· Breeding and Biotechnology
· Chemistry and Nutrition
· Crop Growth and Farming Systems
· Processing and Product Development
· Crop Protection

The Congress has been extended to allow scientists to come together in small interest groups after the Congress to discuss their interests in further detail. A range of workshops has been included on the fourth day of the Congress to cover those topics which are of most interest. These will include blackleg, rapid analytical methodology and up to four other topics as determined by the responses of delegates.

In addition, delegates will have the opportunity to inspect detailed research trials during a pre-Congress tour in Southern New South Wales. There are also some very interesting post Congress tours which are outlined in the Congress brochure.

Many of the delegates who attend the International Rapeseed Congress have become friends and colleagues in research over the years. The International Congress is the central meeting forum for rapeseed scientists in the world and an occasion to which delegates of past Congresses look forward. New participants are sure also to find the group friendly, supportive and useful in future research.

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