



We ask experts whether genetic modification can control food prices

## To GM or not to GM?

### FOOD

**D**ebates about GM food are back, with Prince Charles warning us about its effect on the environment and livelihoods of farmers in developing countries.

But with rising food prices, GM supporters say that the technology is necessary to control the costs of food.

Environment minister Phil Woolas has said: 'There is a growing question of whether GM crops can help the developing world out of the current food-price crisis.'

Given this, and that many scientists insist that GM foods are eaten in many countries with no ill effect, should consumers be reviewing concerns they have about GM food?

**Which? says:** Many consumers are wary of GM food and most retailers and manufacturers don't sell it.

When we approached all of the major supermarkets in August, they said that they had no plans to change their GM policies.

We think that consumers should be able to choose whether to eat GM ingredients or not.

The government must introduce strict rules to avoid cross-contamination between GM and non-GM crops.

It must also ensure that there are robust approval processes in place before GM crops are grown commercially in the UK.

Such choice for consumers and scrutiny mustn't be undermined in the current economic climate.



**Professor Ian Crute**  
Director,  
Rothamsted  
Research

**FOR:** GM crops are part of the solution to a complex problem.

Global grain stocks are at their lowest for more than a decade and price hikes follow supply concerns.

We need to produce more food, but the weather, pests and disease are unpredictable.

We could cultivate more land but removing forests or grasslands would affect our climate and biodiversity. It's better to apply GM technology so land we use now can maximise crop yields more efficiently.

GM technology could lead to crops that need less water. It might also help produce crops that are tolerant of difficult conditions, such as saline soil.

In 2006, high temperatures in southern Europe reduced wheat yields – genetically modified crops could be created to withstand such extreme weather.

Around 25% of the world's crops are lost to pests, disease and weeds, so we rely on chemical insecticides, fungicides and herbicides that carry environmental costs. Producing pest- and disease-resistant crops through genetic modification would reduce our reliance on chemicals.

GM may be a long-term solution but it could significantly improve food security.

The world's population is predicted to increase to nine billion in the next 30 years. Already, 850 million people don't have access to enough food, so without the right action food shortages will worsen.

And unless we're able to meet demand, food prices will continue to rise.



**Julie Hill**  
Deputy chair,  
Agriculture  
and  
Environment  
Biotechnology  
Commission

**AGAINST:** GM is not the answer to rising food prices.

Conventional methods of crop breeding could increase yields, but during years of growth in food production, less was spent on agricultural research and development. We're now seeing the negative results of this.

Agricultural methods must improve so soils are conserved. Constant ploughing of land is contributing to a slowdown in growth of production. Soil that isn't given time to recover has fewer nutrients and can erode more easily.

We could use current knowledge to pinpoint which varieties of crop could be bred together in a conventional way for higher yields. And to prevent post-harvest losses to pests and moulds, we could improve storage and transport methods.

The track record of GM crops isn't great. Promises of drought-resistant crops and crops that make their own fertiliser aren't proven. And yield benefits have varied.

Some could have ecological effects such as increased soil degradation due to continuous cropping.

Seeds can be pricey for farmers and can often be used only with expensive herbicides.

And as pests can become resistant to pesticides, they could also become resistant to pest-resistant GM crops.

Even if GM might eventually be a tool, it's far from a solution.

Many factors are responsible for rising food prices, particularly the price of oil – used to make fertiliser, to fuel agricultural machinery and to transport crops. If oil prices remain inflated, food prices will stay high.



One of the UK's controversial GM crop sites

The Which? turbine uses more electricity than it generates

# Wind turbine blows cold

## ENVIRONMENT

Wind turbines may have become a poster child for renewable energy in blustery Britain, but the saga of the Which? turbine shows that models for consumers could be a lot of hot air.

We bought a £1,500 Windsave WS1000 turbine in summer 2006 to test its contribution to a typical family household. The project hit red tape from the start.

Administrative costs and delays piled up after the initial planning enquiry (see *Which?*, April 2007, p11, and November

**Children were disturbed by the turbine's ghostly humming noise**

2007, p10), and the turbine wasn't installed until late last year – more than a year on from purchase.

Our tester also had to sign a Windsave disclaimer – sent a year after we paid for the turbine – that we understood it could only be recommended for areas with average annual wind speeds of five metres per second (m/s). Our tester's area has an average speed of 4.7m/s.

We measured the turbine's performance between December 2007 and June 2008 – and found that overall it used more electricity than it generated.



This is due to an inverter that converts energy into a form that's usable by the mains – but it constantly uses power, even when the turbine's not turning.

During a four-month period when the wind around the tester's home was at its strongest, the turbine generated a net amount of just 1.8 kilowatt hours of power – equal to 45 minutes of ironing.

The wind turbine was also noisy. Our tester's children were disturbed by a ghostly humming at night. And at higher wind speeds, there was some vibration – we suspect this could be due to off-centre mounting of the blades during installation.

We can't recommend turbines to anyone living in a built-up environment – considering the purchase cost, planning issues and the small amount of energy produced.

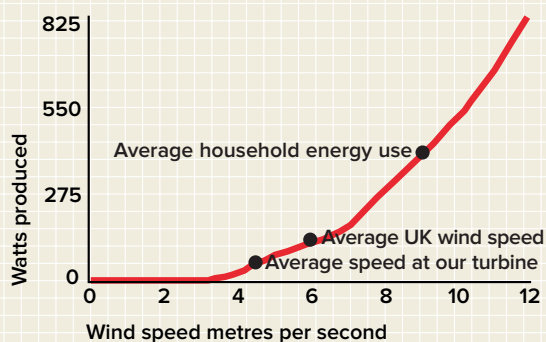
If you live in an open area that's exposed to constant high winds, you'll undoubtedly generate more power, but by how much (see 'Enough wind?', left)?

Visit [www.which.co.uk/windturbine](http://www.which.co.uk/windturbine) for more on our test.

## ENOUGH WIND?

The average UK wind speed – at 10 metres above ground level – is around 6 metres a second (m/s). This graph – based on Windsave WS1000 claims – shows how power (in watts) generated increases with wind speed. Based on this, to meet the needs of the average household that uses 375 watts at any one time, the wind would need to be blowing at more than 8m/s. Few places on the UK mainland reach this sort of speed consistently. Visit [www.bwea.com/noabl](http://www.bwea.com/noabl) to check wind speeds in your area.

**Which? turbine: watts produced at different wind speeds**



## On test... school uniforms

If the credit crunch stopped you from spending on new school uniforms for your children in September, don't worry – you can get affordable uniforms to last through months of classroom science projects and playground antics.

We washed, dried, rubbed, stretched and pulled some of the cheapest uniforms – from Asda, Marks & Spencer (M&S),

Tesco and Sainsbury's – and found that they're all pretty durable.

From as little as £5.70 (at Asda) for a long-sleeved formal shirt, knitted jumper and woven trousers or skirt, you should get long-lasting schoolwear.

In testing – for seam strength, colour fastness, pilling (bobbling) and shrinkage – the

toughest shirt was from Tesco, while the M&S jumper had the fewest bobbles. Asda's uniform was pretty hard-wearing like these two, but its jumper bobbed a lot. Sainsbury's uniform was reasonably durable, with average seam strength on its skirt.

See [www.which.co.uk/schooluniforms](http://www.which.co.uk/schooluniforms) for full results and prices.



PHOTOGRAPHY ALAMY, ROBIN BECKHAM

## Health reports without professional guidance are criticised **‘Frightening’ pharmacy scan**

### HEALTH

A company selling body scanners to healthcare providers including pharmacies has pledged to tackle ‘frightening reports’ given to people about their health, following calls from Which?

In a survey for our pharmacy report (see p12), 44% of respondents said they’d consider using pharmacies for health tests. But while researching the report, a GP told us of concerns about a scanner report that frightened a patient with the number of health issues it raised. Dr James May said the patient then insisted on unnecessary tests.

One of his staff, Carolle Perry (above right), also tried the £60 scanning service at Cam pharmacy in Lambeth, London.

Her report raised dozens of issues. Risks included cardiovascular, renal, respiratory and neuromuscular.

But Dr May was particularly concerned about ‘severe metabolic alkalosis’ – acid loss from the body – found in Carolle’s and the patient’s reports. He said: ‘It’s bizarre that both reports refer to this serious condition, which carries a risk of cardiac arrest and organ failure. If correct, I would expect them to be rushed to hospital.’

Dr May was also alarmed that 17 investigations were recommended, and



**Carolle was told to avoid 118 foods for several weeks**

that Carolle was told to avoid more than 118 foodstuffs for several weeks.

Dr May said: ‘I don’t believe such machines have a place in pharmacies. They may offer more services now, such as dealing with minor ailments – which saves work for me, hassle for patients and earns money for pharmacists – but examples like this erode trust between the pharmacist, GP and patient.’

A spokeswoman for Cenzitek Limited, which sells the electro-interstitial scanners (EIS) in the UK, said: ‘The EIS report is strictly for trained EIS practitioners who can interpret it and give advice knowing the clinical context of the patient. We’ll ensure that all our practitioners are fully aware that the entire report is never to be given to a patient.’

### Vodafone costs

Vodafone mobile customers have been hit by price rises for calls to numbers starting 05 and 08. These numbers aren’t included in ‘free’ minutes deals. Vodafone’s also hiked minimum call charges for calls not counted in free minutes. For pay as you go, it has doubled to 20p (a minute), for 05 and 08 numbers it’s 25p. For contract customers the minimum charge has trebled to 15p, calls to 0871 numbers cost 35p and other 08 numbers are 20p. Visit [www.which.co.uk/vodafonecosts](http://www.which.co.uk/vodafonecosts) for more details.



### iPod Nano overheats

Apple has admitted that iPod Nanos sold between September 2005 and December 2006 can overheat in very rare cases. A battery defect was traced to one supplier. Apple won’t comment on whether other types of iPod have batteries from the same supplier. If you’re worried, call Apple on 0870 876 0753. Email [news@which.co.uk](mailto:news@which.co.uk) with your story if your iPod has overheated.

### Advert concern

Our latest review of TV viewing shows that just four of the top 20 most popular programmes watched by children in June were covered by restrictions on the promotion of less healthy food. During the most popular programme, Beat the Star – that wasn’t covered – Coca-Cola and Oreo Cookies were advertised. We want restrictions extended to apply during the times the children watch television in the greatest numbers.



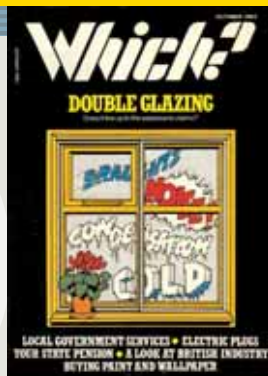
### Information for tenants

From 1 October, landlords must provide energy performance certificates when they rent properties to new tenants. Go to [www.communities.gov.uk/epbd](http://www.communities.gov.uk/epbd) for more information.

## The way we were

### 25 years ago, October 1983

Half of Which? members told us they’d had dealings with double-glazing salesmen in the previous six months. Many were concerned that some salesmen made untrue claims or used high-pressure sales techniques. Some also weren’t clear upfront that they were trying to sell products.



### 50 years ago, autumn 1958

Is it worth buying glucose drinks such as Lucozade to boost energy levels? We concluded that for someone ‘whose appetite lacks lustre’, they might provide valuable carbohydrates. However, an ordinary person with an ordinary diet should get the carbohydrates that they need from the sugars and starch in their food.



**16 miles**

distance that bees can carry  
carry GM pollen

GOVERNMENT TRIALS

**40%**

of diners say their tipping is  
affected by the quality of food

WHICH?

**more than 1,100**

number of restaurants in  
*The Good Food Guide 2009*

WHICH?

The public is reluctant to punish poor service

## Turn the tables on tips

### RESTAURANTS

Half of consumers wouldn't ask for a service charge to be reduced or removed from their bill if they had poor service in a restaurant.

To coincide with the launch of *The Good Food Guide (GFG) 2009*, we surveyed 1,335 people about tipping.

Three quarters said they tipped sometimes, and 85% varied the amount depending on the quality of service.

But in cases of bad service, 49% said they wouldn't demand a reduction or removal of a service charge. Also, 25% choose to tip on top of service charges.

But such double tipping can happen without you realising, if a credit card slip or machine is left open for a tip even when service charges have been added.

GFG editor Liz Carter said: 'Most restaurants say service charges are optional, so customers have every right to deduct them if they haven't had good service.'

'But many are reluctant to put themselves in such awkward situations.'

More than half of people surveyed

said they usually leave tips of 10% or more, with one in five choosing smaller amounts, of around 5%, even if they receive good service.

Breaking the figures down by region, people in Northern Ireland are most likely to tip – 87% do at least sometimes. This compares with the least likely, in the north of England, where 70% tip at least sometimes. People in Scotland, however, are most likely to always tip – 55% do so, while 81% tip at least sometimes.

The most generous tippers live in the south, where 62% tip 10% or more. By contrast, in Northern Ireland just 31% of people tip this amount.

One GFG restaurant inspector told us: 'Service charges are rarely excessive, but they've crept up in recent years to 12.5%.'

Despite this, 70% of all those surveyed said they usually tipped around 10%.

Tipping hit the headlines earlier this year when it was revealed that tax rules allow restaurants to use tips to top up staff wages processed through payrolls to meet the £5.73 an hour minimum wage. The government is expected to close this loophole next year.



### A POOR DEAL FROM TIPS ON CARDS

Member David Drew, a company chairman, says he only tips in cash after discovering a restaurant chain deducted admin fees from tips paid by card.

When asked, staff at branches of Blubeckers told him they preferred cash tips as those on cards were put through payroll and subject to 10% administration charges. This has since been confirmed by the company.

David said: 'I've got no argument with them paying tax, but the admin charge is obviously more than the restaurant is charged by the card company. If fees are charged, this should be made clear on menus.'

#### TAKE ACTION!

■ For a guide on charges and tipping, see *Which?*, May, p78.

Welcoming the move, the GFG chef of the year, Simon Rogan, said: 'Tips should be a reward for staff – not part of their pay. Until the changes come into force, customers should check that service charges actually go to reward staff.'

The Good Food Guide editor reviews Jamie Oliver's new eaterie

## Jamie dishes up tasty basics

### RESTAURANTS

Oxford has welcomed Jamie Oliver's latest venture with open arms. With a no-booking policy, its queues are legendary.

The first of a chain (Bath and Kingston were due to open as we went to press), Jamie's Italian offers simple, reasonably priced modern Italian food delivered by young, efficient, cheerful staff.

Recipes are pared down to their bare essentials, but the chefs don't stint on ingredients.

A basket of fresh Italian bread combined with an antipasti plank of meats, cheeses, pickles and salad makes a great first course to share.

Jamie's pasta has a satisfying rustic edge, whether it's fiery penne arrabiata or tagliatelle with pungent pesto, purple

potatoes and green beans.

The grilled tender Welsh lamb chops with thick, fresh mint sauce shouldn't be missed. Crispy polenta chips with rosemary salt is a perfect accompaniment.

A shame then that an Italian-style Bakewell tart arrives via a microwave, it seems.

Still, Jamie's Italian has so much to offer that there should be one in every town.



Jamie's Italian  
24-26 George Street Oxford, OX1 2AE  
01865 838383  
www.jamiesitalian.com  
Average for 3 courses without wine:  
£18.75