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Twenty years on, the GM debate continues

The 20-year anniversary of the release of the first commercial genetically modified (GM) crops in Australia in 1996 provides an opportunity to review the progress of GM crops, the extent to which they have or have not delivered on their promise, and likely future developments in genetic modification.

Papers included in the Winter 2017 edition of the *Farm Policy Journal* provide a variety of different perspectives on GMOs crops and their legacy and future in Australia.

In many respects, the rate and extent of global adoption of GM crops and the rate of adoption of these by farmers is a very strong testament to the benefits this technology brings, and at the same time stands in stark contrast to the demonic characterisation of this technology by its opponents as harmful and dangerous.

The papers in this edition suggest that perhaps the biggest failure in relation to GM crops has been the farming and scientific community's inability to bring the general public on the journey with them, which has been a major impediment to realising more of the benefits.

'The history of GM crops in Australia over the past 20 years has highlighted the enormous benefits that the technology has provided for farmers in some sectors, but also serves as a reminder that the biggest impediment to achieving additional benefits is the continuing reluctance of the wider community to embrace this technology,' said Mick Keogh, Executive Director of the Australian Farm Institute.

Articles included in the Winter 2017 Journal:

- 'The GMO Advocacy Effort – A Farmer's Perspective', by Hugh Roberts, NSW Farmers' Association
- 'Gene Technology – Public Perception, Community Values and the Public Relations Machine. Has Agriculture Taken the Community on the Journey?', by Paula Fitzgerald
- 'The Future of Crop Improvement with Genome Editing Technology', by Armin Scheben and David Edwards, University of Western Australia
- 'Reframing GM Communication: From Deficit to Discussion and Engagement', by Heather J Bray and Rachel A Ankeny, University of Adelaide
- 'Biotechnology for Changing Practice', by Nicola Cottee, Cotton Australia
- 'Why are Genetic Modification and Organic Incompatible?', by Tim Marshall, The Organic Federation of Australia

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