

Academic and governmental research on GMOs has been the target of numerous acts of vandalism in Europe

Summary. More than 70 acts of vandalism against academic or governmental GMO research are listed for the 4 countries considered, namely Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Switzerland. The vast majority were field tests designed to assess the safety of GMOs. Some attacks have affected confined experiments. In a few cases, the destruction of an experiment was accompanied by other damage to property, threats or violence against persons.

Switzerland

During the night of **23rd- 24th June 2010**, at Pully, an experimental transgenic wheat field underwent an act of sabotage (herbicide spraying).

Furthermore, a renowned plant scientist, on the night of **28th- 29th June 2010** suffered damage to possessions at his private residence near Zurich, an act of vandalism claimed by an anti-GMO group who declared it self "inspired by the Pully sabotage".

These acts followed attacks in previous years against transgenic wheat fields, on **13th June 2008** at the **Federal Station for Agronomic Research (Agroscope Reckenholz-Tänikon)**, and on **23rd June 2009** at the **Federal Station for Agronomic Research (Agroscope Pully-Candaux** near Lausanne).

France

A mysterious group called "Researchers in the night" proceeded, on the night of **25th-26th June 2000**, to destroy experiments of diverse transgenic plants (tomatoes, bananas, tobacco, arabidopsis) in a greenhouse of a **Research centre of the National Institute for Agronomic Research (INRA) near Toulouse**.

Field trials of two **INRA** teams, in association with **CETIOM**, implemented at Gaudiès (Ariège) were destroyed on **2nd June 1999** and on **13th April 2000** by GMO opponents. These field trials were intended to estimate the possibility of outcrossings between rapeseed and related wild species.

During the weekend of **September 5th 2009**, a field trial of vine with transgenic stocks, intended to fight against the grapevine fanleaf virus, was plundered by an individual at the **INRA centre of Colmar** (Alsace), despite an on-going long process of dialogue with opponents.

One can add to this list of destroyed "public interest" research:

-The **GEVES** (a joint centre for studies and controls of plant varieties and seeds), a "public interest organisation". In the evening of **22nd July 2003**, in Guyancourt (Yvelines, near Paris), an anti-GMO group plundered a plot of land intended to check transgenic corn varieties. Similar acts were perpetrated on **16th July 2001** on a maize plot.

-Two field trials run by Arvalis (an applied research organism financed and managed by producers) in collaboration with State Offices, **INRA**, **CETIOM** and environmentalist organisations, within the frame of the "**Biovigilance**" Comity implemented by the Ministries of Agriculture and of Environment. These 6000 m² of GM maize were destroyed on the night of **3rd- 4th October 2004** by unknown perpetrators near Dijon.

The **CIRAD (Centre for international cooperation in agronomic research and development)** was attacked twice:

-On **5th June 1999**, a group led by José Bové penetrated by effraction a greenhouse in Montpellier and destroyed cultures of rice and also computers.

-The **CIRAD's** only experimental culture of genetically modified coffee, planted at Sinnamary (French Guyana), was destroyed by strangers (destruction discovered on **30th August 2004**). This trial had for objective to study the resistance to a leaf borer parasite and also the possible impacts on the environment of these plants. Guyana had been chosen because of the absence of surrounding cultures of coffee trees.

United Kingdom

Among other destructions, on **7th July 2007**, a field trial of the **National Institute for Agriculture and Botany** concerning potatoes developed by BASF to resist à fungus was destroyed in Cambridgeshire. On **5th June 2008**, a field trial of the **Centre for Plant Sciences, University of Leeds**, concerning potatoes developed to control nematodes was destroyed.

The **farm-scale evaluations** (FSE) involved 256 plantings in England after January 2000, in addition to the first three sites planted in the autumn of 1999.

During the 2000-2008 period, 41 plantings were vandalised and of these, eight were terminated and 33 continued to be used in the evaluations. The list of vandalised sites is as follows (source: Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs):

Local Village / Town or Parish	Reglementary (Part B) consent reference number	Crop type	Vandalism consequences
Norfolk - Great Moulton	01/R33/11	Oilseed rape (winter)	Trial terminated
Dorset - Hilton	00/R33/09	Oilseed rape (spring)	Trial continued
Norfolk -Bradenham	99/R22/16	Sugar beet	Trial continued
Norfolk -Raynham (East Raynham)	99/R22/16	Sugar beet	Trial continued
Dorset -Bincombe	*	Forage maize	Trial terminated
Dorset -Bincombe	*	Forage maize	Trial terminated
Essex -Weeley	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Leeds-Bramham cum Oglethorpe	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Norfolk -Horningtoft	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Norfolk - Old Buckenham	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Shropshire -Hinstock	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Warrington -Lymm	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Shropshire -Whitchurch	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Norfolk -Winfarthing	01/R33/11	Oilseed rape (winter)	Trial continued
Oxfordshire -Hinton Waldrist	01/R33/11	Oilseed rape (winter)	Trial continued
Warwickshire -Long Marston	01/R33/11	Oilseed rape (winter)	Trial continued
Durham -Hutton Magna	00/R33/9	Oilseed rape (spring)	Trial continued
North Lincolnshire -Low Burnham	00/R33/9	Oilseed rape (spring)	Trial continued
Cheshire -Broomedge	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Berkshire -Shinfield	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Dorset -Broadway	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Essex -Wivenhoe	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Essex -Alresford	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Herefordshire -Preston Wynne	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
West Yorkshire - Bramham	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Norfolk - North Tuddenham	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Worcestershire - Crowle	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Nottinghamshire - Meden Vale	00/R33/07	Oilseed rape (winter)	Trial continued
Warwickshire -Harbury	00/R33/07	Oilseed rape (winter)	Trial continued

Gloucestershire - Chipping Campden	98/R19/18	Oilseed rape (spring)	Trial continued
Gloucestershire - Kempsey	98/R19/18	Oilseed rape (spring)	Trial continued
Hertfordshire - Piccotts End	98/R19/18	Oilseed rape (spring)	Trial continued
North Yorkshire - Hutton Magna, Durham	98/R19/18	Oilseed rape (spring)	Trial continued
Norfolk - West Raynham	98/R22/12	Sugar beet	Trial terminated
Suffolk - Kenny Hill	98/R22/12	Sugar beet	Trial terminated
Dorset - Over Compton	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Essex -Wivenhoe	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Herefordshire -Preston Wynne (Rosem)	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Hertfordshire -Harpenden	*	Forage maize	Trial terminated
North Yorkshire - Bramham	*	Forage maize	Trial continued
Hertfordshire -Piccotts End	98/R19/18	Oilseed rape (winter)	Trial terminated

* The forage maize crop had a Part C (for cultivation) consent, ref.C/F/95/12-07.

Germany

(Credit to: *Bundesverband Deutscher Pflanzenzüchter e. V. (Bonn)* and <http://www.gmo-safety.eu/>)

On the night of the **21st- 22nd March 2002**, unknown persons destroyed test fields sown with genetically modified rapeseed in Dahnsdorf (Brandenburg). Several trials of the **Kleinmachnow Federal agency for Biology** have been affected, some of which were part of the safety research programme.

<http://www.gmo-safety.eu/archive/145.dahnsdorf-trial-laid-waste.html>

On the night of **23rd June 2003**, a trial field with genetically modified potatoes on the Roggenstein estate near Munich was destroyed. The field was to be used to propagate potatoes with a higher carotenoid content as part of a project funded by the **Federal Ministry of Research (BMBF)**. The organisation making the application was the **Department of Plant Breeding at the Technische Universität München (TUM)** in Freising-Weihenstephan.

<http://www.gmo-safety.eu/archive/188.potato-field-destroyed.html>

In the early hours of **22nd June 2004**, unknown perpetrators destroyed completely a trial field of genetically modified potatoes. The **Max Planck Institute for Molecular Plant Physiology** in Golm near Potsdam had been conducting basic trials of starch formation in potatoes there.

<http://www.gmo-safety.eu/archive/223.potatoes-destroyed.html>

In June 2006, on the Friday before Whitsun (Pentecost), activists partially destroyed a field trial (10 m²) with genetically modified barley being conducted by the **University of Giessen** as part of safety research.

On Whit Monday, a trial field of GM maize was destroyed in Nürtingen (Baden-Württemberg). **Nürtingen-Geislingen University** was conducting a field trial in collaboration with the Bundessortenamt (**Federal Office of Plant Varieties**) on the one-hectare plot.

<http://www.gmo-safety.eu/archive/433.planned-concerted-attack.html>

In July 2006, radical opponents of genetic engineering destroyed parts of a trial field of GM maize near Forchheim (Karlsruhe district). The site, which includes a plot of GM maize measuring about three hectares, is part of the coexistence research programme of the **Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (BMELV)**.

Several Bt maize fields had already been destroyed earlier in the year, including cultivar trials being conducted by the **Federal Office of Plant Varieties** in Dachwig (Thüringen) and Ladenburg (Baden-Württemberg) and trial fields that were part of biosafety research.

<http://www.gmo-safety.eu/archive/442.alternative-transparency-neutrality-experimental-planting.html>

On the night of **12th June 2007**, unknown perpetrators forced their way onto the trial field and systematically destroyed some of the barley plants belonging to the **University of Giessen**. They had been planted on the research station site belonging to the **Institute for Phytopathology and Applied Zoology** at the end of April. They had been produced from two barley lines developed in the USA, one of which contains an active chitinase gene from a soil fungus. Chitinases break down chitin, which is also a component of fungal cell walls. The second line contains a gene from a soil bacterium producing glucanase. The gene was transferred to barley to improve its brewing properties and to make it more easily digestible as animal feed. However, glucanase also has fungus-resistant properties.

Trial fields belonging to the **University of Giessen** had already been destroyed at the end of **May 2007**. In these fields the Institute for Plant Breeding was conducting value tests on behalf of the **Federal Office of Plant Varieties** with numerous maize varieties, including varieties of GM maize MON810.
<http://www.gmo-safety.eu/news/505.destruction-barley-trial-field.html>

In a repeat of the previous year's events, parts of a trial field with GM maize in Forchheim (Baden-Württemberg) were once again destroyed. The field was part of the coexistence research programme funded by the **Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (BMELV)**, which is investigating practical questions of coexistence between genetically modified and conventional maize farming. During the night of Friday **22nd June 2007**, anti-biotechnology activists forced their way into the field and trampled some of the maize plants.
<http://www.gmo-safety.eu/news/507.attacks-coexistence-trial-field.html>

On **21st April 2008**, in Gatersleben, radical opponents of genetic engineering destroyed a GM wheat field trial from the **Leibniz Institute for Crop Research (IPK)**. This experimentation was planned to test various approaches to increase the protein content of wheat grains and to improve the feed quality.

On **23rd – 24th June 2008**, in Mariensee (Niedersachsen): Destruction of a field trial of the **Julius Kühn Institute (JKI)** devoted to coexistence studies. Unknown offenders with hand scythes destroyed the entire trial (2 hectares), so that is no longer possible to perform the test. The damage is estimated at 20,000 - 30,000 Euro.

On **4th July 2008**, in Rheinstetten (Baden Württemberg), unknown perpetrators destroyed a fenced trial of the **Landwirtschaftlichen Technologiezentrums Augustenberg** (Agricultural Technology Centre). The official coexistence experiment should have provided new data on outcrossing behaviour. Conventional maize plants on an area of 1,600 m² were trampled or cut down. According to preliminary estimates, the damage amounts to around 30,500 Euro.

Also to be noted in 2008:

Seven fields were occupied that year (4 planned for academic research).

31st March – 10th April 2008, in Gießen (Hessen): A GM barley field trial at the **University of Giessen**, occupied in 2006 and 2007, was set free. There was property damage to fences and implements, verbal attacks against members of the Institute and destruction of bee-hives.

Early April 2008, GM opponents occupied a trial field at **Nürtingen-Geislingen University (HfWU)**. The university management bowed to pressure from the protest groups and announced that all trials of genetically modified plants would be stopped for the next five years.

The HfWU has been studying genetically modified plants since 1996, and agronomists have had to contend with the partial destruction of their research projects almost every year since

<http://www.gmo-safety.eu/news/567.cultivation-trial-hands-science.html>

As in 2007, in **2008** GM opponents bound objects (metal bars and bottles filled with concrete and metal parts) to maize plants to prevent their harvest. In two incidents of this kind, extensive damage was caused to a combine harvester.

On **1st June 2009**, 270 apple trees on a trial site owned by the **Institute for Breeding Research on Horticultural and Fruit Crops of the Julius Kühn Institute (JKI)** in Dresden-Pillnitz were destroyed by unknown intruders. Most of the trees were genetically modified plants being grown in tubs in a special safety tent under field-like conditions. It is the first time that protesters have destroyed plants that were not being grown in a field.

<http://www.gmo-safety.eu/news/620.apple-trees-destroyed.html>

On **17th May 2009**, in Groß Lüsewitz (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), GM opponents destroyed large field trials with genetically modified plants on the experimental site of the **AgroBioTechnikum**. These are apparently the same activists who occupied the experimental plots in April. This field trial concerned biosecurity research on GM potatoes, barley and wheat.

On 2nd July 2009, in Groß Lüsewitz (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), unknown perpetrators attacked officially approved field trials of the **Biovativ GmbH** in Groß Lüsewitz. By spraying an unknown liquid, they partially destroyed a GM barley experiment and fully destroyed GM potato and GM wheat experiments. A security guard was injured in the attack.

Also to be noted in 2009:

Four fields were occupied (one planned for academic research).

GM opponents sent threat mails to leading scientists with defamatory content.

GM opponents hindered the sowing of improved Amflora potatoes in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern by catapulting organic potatoes onto the field.

GM opponents beat and injured a security guard in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in his attempt to discourage them to proceed to further destruction.

To be noted in 2010:

Pea field trials relocated to US

<http://www.nature.com/nbt/journal/v28/n1/full/nbt0110-8b.html>

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