

# ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

## Agricultural Biotechnology

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Science and technology helped revolutionize agriculture in the 20th century in many parts of the world. This issue of *Economic Perspectives* highlights how advances in biotechnology can be adapted to benefit the world in the 21st century, particularly developing countries.

Increasing yield potential and desirable traits in plant and animal food products has long been a goal of agricultural science. That is still the goal of agricultural biotechnology, which can be an important tool in reducing hunger and feeding the planet's expanding and longer-living population, while reducing the adverse environmental effects of farming practices.

In a supportive policy and regulatory environment, biotechnology has enormous potential to create crops that resist extreme weather, diseases and pests; require fewer chemicals; and are more nutritious for the humans and livestock that consume them. But there is also controversy surrounding this new technology. The journal addresses the controversies head on and provides sound scientific reasoning for the use of this technology.

In June 2003, agriculture, health and environment ministers from over 110 countries gathered in California and learned first hand how technology, including biotechnology, can increase productivity and reduce global hunger. By sharing information on how technology can increase agricultural productivity, we can help alleviate world hunger.

Contributors to this journal include Under Secretary of State Alan Larson, Under Secretary of Agriculture J.B. Penn, Deputy Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Lester Crawford, and Ambassador Tony Hall, U.S. Representative to the U.N. Agencies for Food and Agriculture, who address a broad range of topics from the basic science of biotechnology to food safety and labeling issues. Their articles are complemented by essays from an internationally respected group of researchers and academics, a State Department fact sheet on the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol and additional resource information.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Ann Veneman".

Ann M. Veneman  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture