

Crawley MJ, et al. Transgenic crops in natural habitats. Nature, 409(2001)6821, 682-3

To assess the persistence of GM crops in natural habitats, GM and non-GM varieties of a number of crops were planted in a natural habitat and their longevity reported. All were extinct within four years. The authors report that this indicates that arable crops are unlikely to survive long outside cultivation.

Comment

Extinction implies that the genetic information within these GM crops would cease to be reproduced and would therefore be eliminated from the environment by natural degeneration.

However, the genetic modifications used in this experiment were not expected to, or designed, to increase competitiveness in a natural habitat. The extinction may therefore have been unsurprising.

Although this extinction is useful news for the Biotech industry, this result will need to be repeated under many different conditions in order for it to become accepted as a generalisable rule.

