

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 10, 2010

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Top Food & Ag Groups Release Consumer Research Measuring Market Potential for Gene-Edited Products

*Findings Suggest Consumers Largely Unaware of the Benefits to Environment and Animal Welfare from
Groundbreaking Technology*

WASHINGTON – The FMI Foundation in partnership with the American Seed Trade Association, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the Farm Foundation, today released a consumer research study measuring market potential for gene-edited products. The nationwide survey examined U.S. consumers' beliefs, awareness, and understanding of gene editing in food and agriculture, and their willingness-to-pay for gene-edited foods as it pertains to fresh and processed vegetables and meat.

Dr. Vincenzina Caputo, assistant professor at the Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics at Michigan State University, in collaboration with Valerie Kilders, research assistant at Michigan State University, and Dr. Jayson Lusk, Distinguished Professor and Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics at Purdue University, surveyed nearly 5,000 U.S. food shoppers who completed simulated purchasing scenarios. Respondents chose between products depicted to be organic, non-GMO, bioengineered, conventional, or gene edited.

Some of the key takeaways from the research include:

- More than half of consumers have never heard of gene editing.
- Despite limited awareness of gene editing, most consumers still value having the option to buy gene-edited foods
- Consumers are more willing to purchase gene-edited foods when they know the specific benefits to the consumer, the environment and animal health.
- When consumers are informed of the benefits of gene editing, market potential for gene-edited products exceeds 15 percent.

“Gene editing, as a plant and animal breeding technique, is a relatively new food technology, so we believed it was important to establish a baseline for consumer understanding and how that level of understanding impacts purchasing decisions,” **stated Leslie Sarasin, President and CEO of FMI, the Food Industry Association.** “We know from experience that new technologies can initially cause consumer confusion, so it is our hope that these research results serve as a path forward for the food and agriculture industries to collaborate and facilitate a better understanding and a common language around gene-edited products.”

“Plant breeding innovations like gene editing hold the key to addressing many of our collective global challenges – from health and nutrition, to hunger and climate change,” **said Andy LaVigne, President & CEO of the American Seed Trade Association.** “Farmers and breeders have been improving plants for

thousands of years, thanks to evolving innovations that allow us to produce better food, feed, and fiber in a safe and sustainable way. This research demonstrates the need to engage in an open dialogue with consumers about the importance of innovation and the critical role it plays in the future of our planet, our health, and our food.”

“The promise that gene editing brings to farmers and ranchers in helping them address some of the most challenging issues means that it is critical we get out in front and engage our neighbors on the benefits of gene editing,” **said Zippy Duvall, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, the nation’s largest general farm organization.** The U.S. is a global leader in agricultural innovation, but to continue to advance on this front we need consumer trust and we also need an appropriate policy framework that does not put our farmers and ranchers in a competitive disadvantage.”

“It is noteworthy that the more information we can share early on about the specific benefits of gene editing, the greater consumer knowledge and acceptance there is,” **said Shari Rogge-Fidler, president and CEO of the Farm Foundation.** “This new technology offers a lot of opportunity for sustainable food production and benefits to the environment, animal welfare, consumers, and farmers, so it is important that we take crucial steps in communicating with consumers.”

The FMI Foundation spearheaded the research as part of its Unified Voice Protocol (UVP) initiative that is designed to bring together key stakeholders on emerging issues impacting consumer trust. This is the second pilot project under the UVP.

To read the full report, go to www.fmifoundation.org.

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About the supporters of the research:



Established in 1996, the FMI Foundation seeks to ensure continued quality and efficiency in the food retailing system and is operated for charitable, educational and scientific purposes. To help support the role of food retailing, the FMI Foundation focuses on research, education and resources in the area of health and well-being, which includes food safety, nutrition and social responsibility considerations. For information regarding the FMI Foundation, visit www.fmifoundation.org

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY Research conducted by Dr. Vincenzina Caputo, Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics, Michigan State University. The author acknowledges the work of Dr. Jayson Lusk (Purdue University), who provided numerous comments on the survey design, the analysis, and report, and the graduate student, Valerie Kilders (Michigan State University), who assisted with the implementation of the survey in Qualtrics, the data analysis and the assembly of the report.



Founded in 1883, the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) represents over 700 companies involved in seed production, plant breeding and related industries in North America. ASTA is the leading voice of action in all matters concerning the development, marketing and movement of seed, associated products and services throughout the world. The association's broad membership offers varieties from alfalfa to zucchini and all production types including conventional, organic and biotech. ASTA promotes the development of better seed to produce better crops for a better quality of life.



Farm Bureau is the country's largest general farm organization, with nearly 6 million member families and representing nearly every type of crop and livestock production across all 50 states and Puerto Rico.



Farm Foundation is an accelerator of practical solutions for agriculture. Our mission is to build trust and understanding at the intersections of agriculture and society. We accomplish this by leveraging non-partisan objective dialogue, information and training, catalyzing solutions and creating multi-stakeholder collaboration. Our vision is to build a future for farmers, our communities and our world.