

## A needle in a haystack

**The future coexistence of ecological and traditional agriculture (with and without GMO) in Europe requires suitable risk management concepts as well as established and standardised surveillance methods. The German VDI has published new guidelines on how to determine the effects of genetically modified organisms (GMO), and hopes that this will help amass information about changes in vegetation.**



Vegetation surveys enable the monitoring of the direct and indirect effects of cultivated genetically modified plants. (Photo: Norbert Lehmann / [www.biosicherheit.de](http://www.biosicherheit.de))

The new VDI 4330 Part 9 guidelines, published in January 2008, provide information on how to set up standardised vegetation surveys and also enable the monitoring of the direct and indirect effects associated with the cultivation of genetically modified plants (GMO).

Vegetation surveys are a compilation of plant diversity in a specific area. They are a basic method of collecting data that are subsequently used to assess whether it is worthwhile to conserve certain plant biocoenoses. Vegetation surveys determine the inventory (flora) and the quantity of ferns and flowering plants in a specific area. By repeating the standardised surveys in the same area it is possible to detect the slightest changes in vegetation that are caused, directly or indirectly, by GMO effects on open land.

The composition of the vegetation is potentially influenced by GMO, but can also be influenced by the climate, edaphic (i.e. soil related) factors and land-use regime.

It is hoped that the standardisation of the procedure will generate highly reproducible results and guarantee the comparability of the data collected. The VDI 4330 Part 9 guidelines are not only a detailed description of how to set up vegetation surveys, but they also provide information on how to analyse and ensure the quality of the results. The guidelines are published by the VDI Biotechnology competence area and can be purchased (€61.50) from the Beuth publishing house in Berlin (tel. +49 30 2601-2260).

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**Press release**

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