

## US expert to push GE benefits

By Owen Hembry

5:30 AM Tuesday Mar 22, 2011

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US professor Pamela Ronald will be at the NZBIO conference in Auckland tomorrow to talk about how organic farming and genetic engineering can contribute to sustainable agriculture.



Pamela Ronald. Photo / Supplied

Ronald, a professor of plant pathology at the University of California, Davis, will talk about her book, *Tomorrow's Table*, co-authored with her organic farmer husband.

"I will give some examples of how we're thinking of sustainable agricultural systems and how organic production and genetically engineered crops can contribute to a future sustainable agriculture," Ronald said.

"Actually I went into plant genetics because of my concern for agriculture and the environment."

The global population was projected to grow from about 7 billion today to reach 9.2 billion by 2050, Ronald said.

"Approximately we have to produce twice as much food by then so the critical issue is how can we do that without destroying the environment any more than we have already."

Cotton farming used 25 per cent of the world's insecticides but farmers in Arizona using genetically engineered cotton had been able to reduce its use to half that of conventional production.

Insecticides poisoned millions of people every year, Ronald said.

"I think if you can bring








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down the use of insecticides by using genetic engineering or any technique you're moving in the right direction," she said. "In our book we try to emphasize that it's the sustainability of the system that matters more than the technique that's used."

Ronald said she wrote the book for the public to think about the problems faced by farmers and to explain what geneticists did.

"We tried to demystify the kinds of things that geneticists and organic farmers do and really we have the same goal, my husband and I, which is to develop a more sustainable ecological framework for farming."

The NZBIO conference ends tomorrow at SkyCity Convention Centre.

- [NZ Herald](#)

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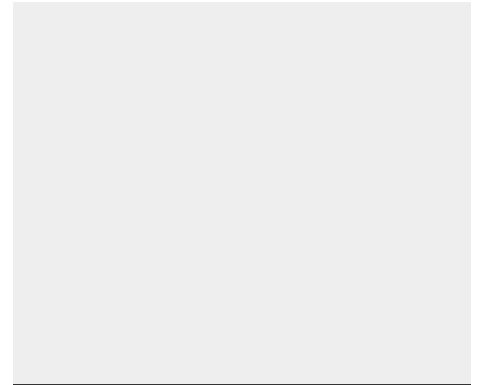
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