

High tech Professor in town

Professor Bill McKelvey of the Scottish Agricultural College thinks a future hungry world cannot be fed by organic agriculture. His comments to a London press conference generated some heat (but little light) in the media about how technology, including GM cropping, holds the real key to boosting food production. Society must make that choice, he says.

But, there is one certainty Prof McKelvey has failed to factor in. We are rapidly heading for a post-fossil fuel era. Already we have passed global peak oil production. Modern, intensive agriculture is totally underpinned by oil and gas in the fertilisers, agrochemicals and heavy machinery it relies on. We are all "eating oil" as we munch our way through our daily meals.

And by the way, just as the oil disappears, the world will also be facing a severe shortage of fresh water for all uses including agriculture.

So the question has to be asked – with what global resources (besides his magical GM seeds) does Prof McKelvey plan "to continue to intensify farming"? The sooner the world wakes up to the notion that organic agriculture, with no requirement for fossil fuel inputs, is the only truly sustainable game in town, the better.