**BOOK REVIEW**

**Growing Resistance: Canadian Farmers and the Politics of Genetically Modified Wheat**


A detailed description of the long-waged quarrel between proponents and opponents of transgenic wheat varieties, commonly called genetically modified organisms (GMOs), is presented in this compelling account by Emily Eaton from the Geography Department, University of Regina. Although GM crops were introduced more than two decades ago, and transgenic canola is accepted on most Canadian farms, there is still much uncertainty about the deployment of this technology in the agricultural sector, a concern especially among consumers. Presented in an easily accessible and well-documented book, the politics, economics, environmental suitability, sustainability, and producer and consumer opinions about use of GMOs are woven together in this persuasive and informative narrative.

As a part of her doctoral dissertation, Dr. Eaton used extensive interviews with representatives of government organizations, biotechnology lobbyists, private companies, farmers who presently grow wheat, and consumers. Based on this broad window of opinions, the author provides us with multiple perspectives on the desirability of introducing transgenic wheat and dealing with the uncertainties of the marketplace for a still controversial product called “Roundup-Ready” wheat.

The context for wheat in Canada is framed by tracing the history of the crop back to early settlers on the plains, up to its current status where the country claims four percent of global total production and accounts for 15% of world trade of this important commodity. The fear of wheat farmers and the powerful Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) is that a majority of exports to the European Union and Japan, where consumers do not accept this product, would be lost if transgenic wheat were to enter the supply chain. Most participants are concerned with lack of assurance that there could be adequate isolation of the more accepted conventional product from the GM wheat from point of harvest through the complex shipping system to reach its buyer destination. As a result of these widespread marketing and popular concerns, Monsanto, the company that was developing the new herbicide-tolerant wheat, announced in 2004 that it would “discontinue breeding and field level research of Roundup Ready wheat” [p. 3], and sharply curtail their investment in the new technology in spite of spending more than a decade in development and testing.

What makes the story especially intriguing are the opposing positions taken by major players related to the wheat industry and consumers, and the unusual alliances that emerged. The federal government and its research and regulatory agencies, such as the Canadian Environmental Protection Agency, along with national biotechnology advisory groups and industry, generally supported approval and release of the new transgenic wheat. On the other side of the issue was a highly diverse coalition of groups, including the Canadian Wheat Board, National Farmers Union, Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, and Greenpeace, organizations that often would not talk to each other about most environmental and social issues. Although divided on the matter, scientists through the Royal Society of Canada voiced their recommendations on how biotechnology should be governed.

An interesting back story in this intrigue was the continual reference to acceptance of GM canola, which