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## France

**Post:** Paris

### **Attack on Transgenic Rootstock Vines Destroys Research**

#### **Report Categories:**

Biotechnology

Agriculture in the News

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#### **Report Highlights:**

On September 7, 2009, seventy feet of genetically modified vines at the center of a French National Institute for Agricultural Research four-year research program were destroyed. In conformity with French and EU mandated regulation, INRA published details that openly disclosed the location of the trials. The attack was condemned by many, because the experiment united researchers, growers, politicians, unions, as well as nature and conservation groups. The French 2008 biotech bill set harsher penalties for biotech crop destructions, which have never been implemented, to date.

#### **General Information:**

On September 7, 2009, seventy feet of genetically modified vines at the center of a French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA) four-year research program in Alsace were destroyed. INRA is an agricultural research institute that addresses development issues, from the local to the

international level. Its research is guided by developments in scientific fields and focuses on worldwide challenges related to food and nutrition, the environment, and land use facing the world of agriculture and agronomics today.

The vines were surrounded by 1,600 feet of non-biotech vines, and in conformity with French and EU mandated regulation, INRA published details that openly disclosed the location of the trials. Only the rootstock of the destroyed vines had undergone genetic manipulation, hence limiting the risk of spread of the genetic event. The trial was the subject of a permit based on scientific risk assessment and environmental health. It was to find a response to grapevine fanleaf, a virus transmitted to the vine by a worm, against which there is no treatment.

During the summer of 2006 and 2007, anti-biotech activists destroyed two-thirds of the open-field test plots (see report [FR7022](#)). As a result of the national ban on MON 810, there have been no commercial plantings in France since 2008, and limited open field testing (see report [FR8008](#)). The attack in 2009 was condemned by many, because the experiment united researchers, growers, politicians, unions, as well as nature and conservation groups. The French Minister of Higher Education and Research said the attacks undermined the capacity of public research in biotechnology. The French Minister of Agriculture and Food strongly condemned the attack, considering it contrary to the rule of law and the respect for property.

The French 2008 biotech bill set harsher penalties for biotech crop destructions (see [FR8008](#)), which have never been implemented, to date. In its press release, the French Minister of Agriculture and Food stated that the penalties could reach up to 3 years of prison and 150,000 Euros in fines.