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Editorial

Global phytochemistry

As we stated in an earlier issue (54:1) we are intending to initiate a series of Editorial Comments. This will be an occasional series of articles where Regional Editors, Board members and other “guest” editors, will be invited to comment on phytochemistry topics of global interest and debate. Thus, we intend to raise issues relating to the GM debate, patenting of plants and plant products, and, since many of the plant products come from the indigenous flora of the developing world, issues of biopiracy and the transfer of technology. We will also address directly the views of phytochemists in the various regions of the world with respect to issues that are peculiar to them and how discoveries and developments could be exploited to the maximum benefit to all concerned. We shall not ignore commercial interests and the involvement of companies in the bio-business that after all has driven many of the spectacular recent developments. We should not ignore the contribution of the plant programmes, that are the

equivalent of the human genome project, to information now present in the public domain.

In the first of our occasional series of debates on issues concerning Biotechnology relating to plants, we have great pleasure in giving the forum to Jeroen van Wijk of the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. Jeroen has specialised in global agricultural economic issues for some time and has published on diverse aspects of modern agricultural biotechnology such as intellectual property rights and agriculture in developing countries and the impact of plant breeder's rights. In the following article, he addresses traditional healthcare and biopiracy in relation to wider issues in a thought-provoking discussion.

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Phytochemistry Regional Editors