

## POLICY

### Wandering wheat

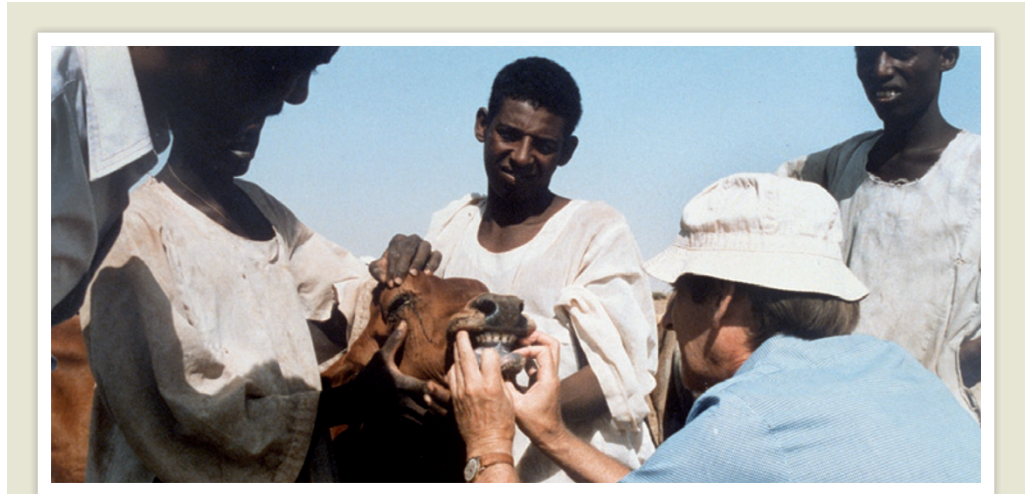
Unapproved transgenic wheat has been found on a farm in Oregon, the US Department of Agriculture announced on 29 May. The strain, which bears a transgene that confers resistance to the herbicide glyphosate, was field-tested in 16 US states between 1998 and 2005 by Monsanto, an agricultural-technology company based in St Louis, Missouri (see *Nature* 497, 24–26; 2013). Regulators are investigating how the wheat escaped but said that it does not pose a risk to food safety. No transgenic wheat varieties have been approved for sale or commercial production in the United States.

### Cancer targets

The US Food and Drug Administration announced the approval on 29 May of two drugs for use against advanced melanomas harbouring mutated forms of a protein called BRAF that fuels tumour growth. One drug, called Mekinist (trametinib), is the first cancer drug to target MEK, a protein which is activated by mutated BRAF. The other drug, called Tafinlar (dabrafenib), targets BRAF directly. Both drugs were developed by the London-based firm GlaxoSmithKline. See [go.nature.com/lmmsk](http://go.nature.com/lmmsk) for more.

### Fish deal decided

European politicians agreed last week on an updated policy governing European Union fisheries. The deal will attempt to restore fish populations to healthy levels and reduce the discarding of unwanted catches. Researchers and conservationists had complained for years that



F. PALADINI/FAO

## Taking stock of rinderpest

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in Paris decided last week that it will require its 178 member countries to report annually on any stocks of the rinderpest virus. In 2011, the devastating cattle disease became the first pathogen after smallpox to be globally eradicated (pictured is a person checking for mouth lesions caused by the virus). Informal

surveys suggest that at least 40 labs in some 20 countries still hold rinderpest, creating the risk of an accidental or deliberate reintroduction of the pathogen (see *Nature* 488, 15; 2012). Keith Hamilton, an OIE official, says that the new rule should provide “a more accurate picture of how much virus is still being held in labs”, and will aid the containment and destruction of rinderpest.

previous rules allowed overfishing. See page 17 for more.

## FACILITIES

### SESAME seeded

A funding boost was received last week for SESAME, a synchrotron facility in Jordan intended to promote peace and scientific collaboration between Middle Eastern countries. Italy pledged €1 million (US\$1.3 million) in its proposed budget and the European Commission will chip in €5 million for magnets from CERN, Europe’s particle-physics laboratory near Geneva, Switzerland. Despite contributions already promised by Jordan, Iran, Israel and Turkey, a further \$8 million will be needed to start up the facility in 2015 as planned (see also [go.nature.com/5pldwq](http://go.nature.com/5pldwq)).

### Marine lab ties

On 1 June, members of the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, voted 158 to 2 in favour of an alliance with the University of Chicago in Illinois. The tie would help the 125-year-old lab to dodge further financial hardship after facing a shortfall of nearly US\$6 million in its 2012 operating budget. The alliance must still be finalized by each institution’s board of trustees. See [go.nature.com/lukscr](http://go.nature.com/lukscr) for more.

### Open drug libraries

Japan’s first public-private partnership aimed at tackling infectious diseases in developing countries announced its inaugural raft of research collaborations on 31 May. The Tokyo-based Global Health Innovative Technology Fund was

launched in April with a 5-year commitment of more than US\$100 million from the Japanese government, several Japanese pharmaceutical companies and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, headquartered in Seattle, Washington. Its first 13 partnerships will allow three international non-profit organizations to search for candidate drugs for malaria, tuberculosis and a host of neglected diseases by accessing the chemical libraries of Japan’s leading pharmaceutical firms.

## EVENTS

### Coronavirus spread

Last weekend, Italy reported its first cases of the novel Middle East coronavirus: a 45-year-old man from Tuscany who had travelled to Jordan, and two close contacts. The

same pattern of (probably limited) human-to-human transmission has been seen with cases exported from the Middle East to Tunisia, France and Britain. Since last September, the World Health Organization has been told of 53 cases, mostly in Saudi Arabia, including 30 deaths. But the numbers of exported infections suggest that some Middle Eastern cases are going undetected.

## PEOPLE

**Medical prize**

Immunobiologist Ruslan Medzhitov has received the first award of a medical research prize from the Else Kröner Fresenius Foundation in Bad Homburg, Germany. The €4-million (US\$5.2-million) award — including €500,000 for personal use — will be given every four years. On 5 June, the foundation chose Medzhitov, of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, for his work on the links between the innate immune system, which provides fast, non-specific defence against infections, and the adaptive immune system, which provides specialized responses.

**Russian leadership**

Russia's largest research organization, the Russian Academy of Sciences, elected a new president on 29 May



for the first time since 1991. Vladimir Fortov (pictured), a 67-year-old plasma physicist and former science minister in the Russian government, succeeds mathematician Yuri Osipov as the academy's leader. The agency employs around 45,000 scientists at more than 400 research institutes across Russia. See [go.nature.com/9ntyw7](http://go.nature.com/9ntyw7) for more.

## RESEARCH

**H7N9 virus returns**

China reported on 29 May its first new case of the H7N9 avian influenza virus in three weeks — a six-year-old boy who fell ill in Beijing on 21 May. Since March, 132 cases have been confirmed in China, including 37 deaths. But the lull in new cases — possibly attributable to closures of live bird markets — might be only temporary. Animal reservoirs and transmission

routes for the virus have yet to be unravelled. Researchers last week reported the emergence of drug resistance in H7N9 to oseltamivir, the mainstay treatment for H7N9 flu (Y. Hu *et al.* *The Lancet* <http://doi.org/mqt>; 2013).

**Tag-along moon**

A 2.7-kilometre-wide asteroid that zipped past Earth on 31 May has been found to have its own moon. Radar imaging from the Deep Space Network antenna complex in Goldstone, California, revealed a 600-metre-wide satellite orbiting asteroid 1998 QE2, which flew 5.8 million kilometres from Earth at its closest approach — about 15 times the Earth–Moon distance. Astronomers in Goldstone and at Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico will continue to track the asteroid system to better assess the masses and densities of the rocks.

**Restricted access**

Reverberations from ongoing legal challenges have led the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to turn down scores of requests for clinical-trial data. The agency is attempting to broaden public access to the information it receives from companies seeking drug approval. However, pharmaceutical firms AbbVie of North Chicago, Illinois,

## COMING UP

**12–15 JUNE**

Researchers gather in Boston, Massachusetts, to discuss the cutting edge of stem-cell science at the annual meeting of the International Society for Stem Cell Research.

[go.nature.com/cc1mh1](http://go.nature.com/cc1mh1)

and InterMune of Brisbane, California, took the EMA to court earlier this year to prevent the release of some of their data. See [go.nature.com/efqspj](http://go.nature.com/efqspj) for more.

**Martian minerals**

The Mars Express spacecraft has now mapped the distributions of key minerals over almost all of the red planet's surface, the European Space Agency (ESA) announced on 3 June, a decade after the mission's launch. Clusters of hydrated minerals, detected by the spacecraft's OMEGA instrument, reinforce the view that water was present on Mars in its early history. The data suggest potential landing sites for future missions searching for signs of life on the planet, such as ESA's ExoMars mission.

## CORRECTION

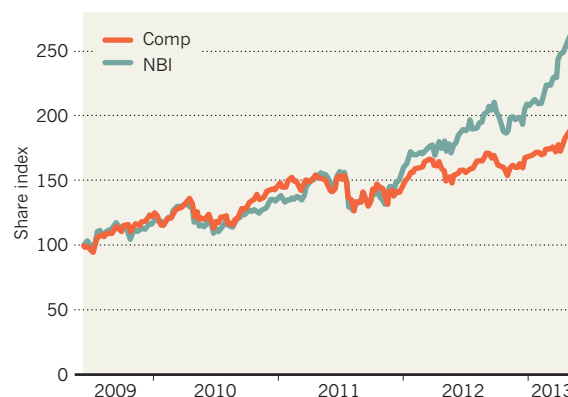
The Seven Days item 'Lawsuit settlement' (*Nature* **496**, 402; 2013) wrongly stated that Philippe Bois had successfully appealed against a finding of research misconduct. In fact, Bois had successfully challenged a judge's denial of his request for a defence hearing. In his court settlement, Bois denied that he committed research misconduct, but agreed not to appeal further the findings that he had done so.

## TREND WATCH

Two biotechnology firms went public on US markets in the past week, bringing the year's total to 17 and boosting hopes that public markets are again welcoming the industry. Epizyme in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which focuses on cancer treatments, and Kamada, a pharmaceutical firm in Ness Ziona, Israel, entered the market during a boom. Over the past year, the NASDAQ Biotechnology Index, an amalgam of biotech and pharma stocks, has far outpaced the NASDAQ Composite (see chart).

## BIOTECH BOOMING

The NASDAQ Biotechnology Index (NBI) is rising much faster than the NASDAQ Composite (Comp).



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