

## POLICY

### GM study slammed

A study claiming that rats fed Monsanto's genetically modified NK603 maize (corn) or its companion glyphosate-based herbicide, Roundup, showed increased incidences of cancer (G.-E. Séralini *et al.* *Food Chem. Toxicol.* <http://doi.org/jgq; 2012>) has been roundly criticized by the European Food Safety Authority. On 4 October, the agency called on the study's authors to share more of their data and said that it was "presently unable to regard the authors' conclusions as scientifically sound". See page 158 for more.

### Nuclear safety

Hundreds of safety upgrades are needed at European nuclear reactors, according to an analysis of the continent's power plants. Following the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear crisis in Japan, the European Commission ran safety tests that included all 145 reactors at nuclear power plants in the European Union. A report on these 'stress tests', published on 4 October, found that "practically all" nuclear plants need safety improvements. Problems ranged from the lack of back-up control rooms to substandard risk assessments. See [go.nature.com/cbbiah](http://go.nature.com/cbbiah) for more.

### Fracking furore

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said last week that data provided by the US Geological Survey were consistent with its December 2011 finding that the use of hydraulic fracturing — or 'fracking' — to extract natural gas had contaminated groundwater near Pavillion, Wyoming. An independent analysis commissioned by



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## Mammoth unearthed from Siberian mud

A remarkably well-preserved 30,000-year-old mammoth was revealed on 4 October, after an 11-year-old boy had spotted its limbs jutting out from the frozen mud of the Taymyr peninsula in northern Russia earlier this year. Researchers excavated the 500-kilogram

carcass from the Siberian tundra in September, and it was formally identified earlier this month. Researchers at the Zoology Institute in St Petersburg said that its DNA was badly damaged, probably making it useless for cloning (see *Nature* **456**, 310–314; 2008).

environmental groups and published on 3 October supported the EPA's assessment, but industry officials continue to question the source of the contamination. See [go.nature.com/xzorhp](http://go.nature.com/xzorhp) for more.

### UK funding boost

The UK government will add £200 million (US\$321 million) to a fund to promote research partnerships between universities and industry, which the government says has been oversubscribed since it launched with £100 million in June. The announcement on 8 October was welcomed by scientists, although the Campaign for Science and Engineering, a London-based

lobby group, noted that science investment is yet to recover from budgets slashed in 2010.

## BUSINESS

### Chemistry lawsuit

The American Chemical Society, the world's largest scientific society, announced on 5 October that it would pay US\$22.6 million to Leadscope, a chemical-information company in Columbus, Ohio, to settle a ten-year lawsuit. The Ohio Supreme Court had found on 18 September that the society's 2002 lawsuit against Leadscope was "objectively baseless" (see *Nature* **489**, 482–483; 2012) and had been filed unfairly to crush a competitor

to its Chemical Abstracts Service, which brings in some \$300 million a year to the non-profit society.

### Dystrophy drug hope

The experimental drug eteplirsen may help patients with Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD), a clinical trial of 12 boys with the condition reported on 3 October. Scientists at biotech firm Sarepta Therapeutics in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which makes the drug, revealed that four boys who had taken a high dose of eteplirsen for nearly a year were able to walk an average of 21 metres farther in six minutes than at the start of the trial. (Those on a placebo showed a decline

of 68 metres.) The company plans to file for regulatory approval with the US Food and Drug Administration. About 1 in 3,600 boys develops DMD, which is caused by mutations in a gene on the X chromosome and eventually leads to paralysis and death.

## Private spaceflight

California firm SpaceX launched its first mission to resupply the International Space Station on 7 October, a milestone in commercial spaceflight. As *Nature* went to press, the Dragon craft was due to dock with the space station on 10 October. The launch saw one engine fail, but the craft reached orbit. SpaceX, based in Hawthorne, said that, with nine engines, its Falcon 9 rocket was designed to handle such a problem. See [go.nature.com/rvvn4f](http://go.nature.com/rvvn4f) for more.

### PEOPLE

## Fraud funding probe

Diederik Stapel, a social psychologist formerly based at Tilburg University in the Netherlands, is under investigation by Dutch authorities, according to newspaper reports. Stapel resigned from his post last year after he was found to have fabricated data in some 30 published papers (see *Nature* 479, 15; 2011). The



new investigation will seek to determine whether Stapel defrauded the government by misappropriating grant money.

## Nobel prizes

This year's Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine went to stem-cell experts John Gurdon and Shinya Yamanaka, for their work on reprogramming mature cells into their embryonic state. The physics prize was won by Serge Haroche and David Wineland, for their experiments in quantum optics. See pages 151 and 152 for more. *Nature* went to press before the chemistry prize was awarded, but full details will be available at [go.nature.com/5yjkul](http://go.nature.com/5yjkul).

## Genius grants

The MacArthur Foundation, headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, selected its fellows for 2012 on 1 October. Fellowships are worth US\$500,000 over 5 years,

and this year, 10 out of 23 recipients are scientists, including microbiologist Sarkis Mazmanian, astronomer Olivier Guyon and marine ecologist Nancy Rabalais. The awards, popularly known as genius grants, come with no strings attached as to how the money is spent. See [go.nature.com/ru2vgy](http://go.nature.com/ru2vgy) for more.

### EVENTS

## Chemical spill

South Korea's government has designated the area around a chemical spill in the southeastern city of Gumi a special disaster zone. The 8 October announcement came nearly 2 weeks after an explosion at the Hube Globe chemical plant released some 8 tonnes of hydrofluoric acid. Five workers were killed, according to the Yonhap news agency. More than 3,000 people have since been treated after inhaling acid fumes, and the leak has damaged crops and livestock. See [go.nature.com/yqjpnf](http://go.nature.com/yqjpnf) for more.

### RESEARCH

## Telescope array

One of the world's most powerful radio-telescope arrays, the Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder, was officially opened on 5 October at the

## COMING UP

### 13–17 OCTOBER

The Society for Neuroscience meets in New Orleans, Louisiana. Featured topics include the changing ecosystem of global neuroscience, with collaborative efforts and 'big data' coming to the fore. [www.sfn.org/am2012](http://www.sfn.org/am2012)

### 14–19 OCTOBER

New results from the Curiosity rover on Mars, and from the Kepler mission searching for extrasolar planets, are announced at the meeting of the American Astronomical Society's Division for Planetary Sciences in Reno, Nevada. [www.psi.edu/dps12](http://www.psi.edu/dps12)

Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory in Western Australia. Composed of 36 antennas, each 12 metres in diameter, the telescope will map black holes and take a census of local galaxies, as well as testing out technology for a larger project in which it is due to be involved: the Square Kilometre Array, split between Australia and South Africa.

## A year in space

Two astronauts — one American and one Russian — will stay on the International Space Station for an entire year in a mission beginning in spring 2015, NASA said on 5 October. Space-station missions are usually restricted to six months. The mission will collect more data about how humans react to long stays in space. But one year is not a record: Russian cosmonaut Valery Polyakov spent 437 days in space on the Mir space station in 1994–95.

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## TREND WATCH

An analysis of agricultural potential in 12 African countries, released on 9 October, suggests that farmers are making use of just 10–25% of the land where wheat can be grown profitably without irrigation. Africa imports wheat because production lags behind consumption (see chart), but on the basis of modelling by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center in Texcoco, Mexico, the report suggests that farmers could boost domestic yields even in the face of global warming.

## AFRICAN WHEAT PRODUCTION LOAFING

Wheat consumption in Africa has increasingly outstripped domestic production of the grain over the past 50 years.

