

# GE Free New Zealand

## In Food and Environment

### Newsletter .....December 2001

#### GE-Free in 2003?

***"The battle now facing people in this country is to persuade the government NOT to lift the ban on GE commercial releases in 2003"***

If politicians continue to ignore the public support for a GE-Free future, and sideline scientific warnings, New Zealand will be contaminated by the commercial release of GE organisms. The government has decided only to delay releases of GE organisms until 2003.

During the months leading up to 2003 there will be a "constraint" period on releases to allow more research into the social, economic, cultural and ethical issues. The government also claims it will investigate the issue of liability, and the scientific warnings about the dangers of GE.

But field trials will be allowed to continue, including experiments using human genes in cows and sheep despite serious ethical and cultural concerns. Then, later in 2003, irrespective of the findings of these studies, the government has decided to automatically lift the block on approving GE commercial releases.

Unless the government changes its policy and decides to keep commercial GE out of our food and environment, commercial GE releases will proceed. The battle now facing people in this country is to persuade the government NOT to lift the ban on GE commercial releases in 2003 and to share the people's vision for a GE-Free New Zealand.

#### **1% contamination in all food?**

Because DNA spreads, contamination from GE plants and animals will be impossible to stop. This is admitted by the biotech industry who has demanded all consumers accept up to 1% GE

contamination - even in organic food. There is clear evidence that GE cannot co-exist with non-GE production without contaminating it, yet the government is pushing ahead.

GE threatens to destroy the organic food industry and limit future exports of conventional quality agricultural food exports that could become contaminated by GE. The government is also looking at 'free-trade' deals that could make labelling of GE foods "illegal", and deny people a choice.

#### **Insurance**

The taxpayer is being forced into subsidising the biotech industry against the public will. GE is an experimental process largely driven by corporate profit. The risks are so complex, and impossible to calculate that the insurance industry has refused cover. The government say they will look into this, but still the public are being forced to carry the risk of this GE experiments. We are "paying" for threatening our precious environment as well as for our families to be guinea-pigs.

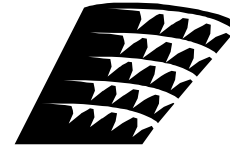
#### **The Bio-Ethics council**

The government has ignored a proposal to set up a special Parliamentary Commissioner for Biotechnology. Instead they have opted for a Bio-Ethics advisory council. The fear is that this will be a talking-shop that will have no power, and will just sideline ethical issues, and cultural concerns from tangata whenua. In that case it will be "business as usual" for pro GE-industry.

#### **Politics and science**

The government says it wants to develop a strategy for science and technology for the country. This must include respect for our shared

and diverse cultural values; support for our Clean Green Image for marketing and tourism; more investment in sustainable technology and organic production. Yet, the push for GE is continuing under the Labour government, just as it did under the National Party. Once commercial releases begin, the vision of keeping the environment and food system "GE-Free" will be destroyed.



The general election in 2002 may be the only chance people will have to oppose the pro-GE policies of Labour and National and to vote for a GE-Free future. Under a GE-Free policy, science and medicine is just as important in developing knowledge and exports. Any policy must include a vision for science that doesn't rely on releasing GE organisms, respect our shared diverse cultural values, support our Clean Green Image and provide more investment in sustainable technology and organic production.

**At the elections, who can voters trust?** The general election in 2002 may be the only chance for us to oppose the pro-GE policies of Labour and National and to vote for a GE-Free future.

Unless Labour and other politicians start listening now, only the Green Party and the Alliance will be left opposing commercial GE releases.

*J. Carapiet spokesperson GE Free*

**GE FREE NEW ZEALAND**  
**wish all our members a**  
**merry GE Free Christmas**  
**and a very happy New Year**

## **Who bears the risk?**

### **Genetic modification and liability**

A report by Sir Geoffrey Palmer  
*Analysis and comments by Susie Lees*

This report on Royal Commission's recommendations shows there is **no protection for the public from any adverse effects of genetic engineering research.**

Criticising the RCI for not giving an analysis in support of recommendations for **NO** change to the existing liability regime, resulting in socialisation of some of the most serious risks of the technology, Sir Geoffrey suggested that the risks will 'remain there unless the public can persuade the government that it should assist.'

All new organisms have the capability of being **hazardous, under HSNO Act 'until proven otherwise'**. GMO's can be seen as having a high potential for damage due to their ability to procreate and mutate. Estimates of any damage are impossible. Sir Geoffrey stated that 3 areas of potential damage exist:- public health, environment / biodiversity, and economic loss, from which claims could arise for:-  
Personal injury via allergens/toxins.  
Effects on non-target species.  
Invasiveness in environment  
Contamination and gene transfer  
Rare events (eg. similar to BSE)

The '**polluter pays principle**' normally forces companies to account for social costs, limiting activities which may be 'privately profitable' yet socially irresponsible.

'**The negligence standard,**' which is the basis of the current liability regime, where corporations may merely comply with the regulatory agency, contrasts with the strict liability systems that should be in place to ensure companies will be responsible for their actions. This type of strict liability is now internationally acceptable for serious risks to the environment.

Also suggesting that liability should not be limited, Sir Geoffrey looks into the possibility of

insurance cover, which could allow adequate financial resources to meet any claim in the absence of sufficient funds being available from any firm. As no insurance company in New Zealand appears to have a policy that would cover living GMO's, the argument that '**Insurance constitutes the best available deep pocket to prevent actual realised costs from simply lying where they fall-or ultimately being picked up by the taxpayers**' is somewhat academic. The Commission stated insurance to be 'a penalty on a particular activity or product', condoning any risk being socialised. For an independent inquiry, paid for by public money to be apparently acting on behalf of proponents of this debatable technology is wholly unacceptable. Rejecting insurance of a risk and failing to identify who will shoulder such a risk is irresponsible.

Our present regulatory regime leans heavily on a prerequisite for ERMA to correctly assess risk – the report states 'an important source of risk in respect of GMO's is unexpected adverse effects. A liability regime based on perfect foresight is therefore ill-suited to these risks.' It goes on to say 'Unless there are compelling reasons ...,uninsurable risks should not be authorised.'

GE technology carries the risk of catastrophic events occurring, other means of insuring this type of event could be available. If government continue '**socialisation of the risks by default**', placing any burden on the public( 62% of whom are against field trials), whilst publicly funding research in Crown Research Institutes and Universities, that is both irresponsible and undemocratic.

To ensure corporate responsibility by those developing GMO's , it is suggested that ERMA approvals are dependent on ultimate liability, suggesting that the government too should have a financial interest '**to protect against any adverse effects**' as it is responsible not only

for any clean-up procedure but also for any biodiversity loss.

Current ERMA approvals are made on a case by case basis. Their criteria, weighting and procedure leave much to be desired. Only breaches of controls are an offence. Instead of regulation of GMO's '**the emphasis is very much on front-end risk rather than on responsibility for any harm to persons or property.**'

The Resource Management Act-RMA states a duty to '**avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effect on the environment**' by any person, whilst other areas of redress are common law actions. These may well be difficult to prove.

With regard to personal injury, with the exception of common law covering rare exceptions, private actions for damages would be the only option.

Several ideas for a new liability framework proposed by Sir Geoffrey Palmer follow:-

**Transparency / provision** - specific liability provision addresses damage to property from GMO release.

**Strict liability** – Liability by user for physical harm, damage and economic loss incl. to organics.

**Positive duty to monitor** – Ongoing duty of applicant to monitor.

**Insurance**-mandatory requirement of any GMO approval.

Also suggested was a fund to provide payments, a modification of the accident compensation legislation could deal with any GMO accidents with the capacity to levy any holding approvals for GMO's in New Zealand.

**Reforms** suggested to legislation were amendments to the HSNO Act these included:- Imposing liability for the supply/use of GMO. Setting out defences that mitigate strict liability. Establishing joint/concurrent liability and making liability insurance a condition of ERMA approval.

**Sir Geoffrey Palmers speech on Precautionary Principle 30.11.01 is on ERMA's website: [www.ermanz.govt.nz](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz)**

Our aim is to **promote food and environment free of GMOs** and their products. New Zealanders views have been clear over the past years, many realising past mistakes have made chemical pollution common throughout New Zealand. They do not want to see genetic pollution added to this burden.



### Your Food

Many countries including New Zealand are now putting up with 1-5% GE ingredients (often as inadvertent contamination) in products – will this increase?

How long before we have **No choice** but to eat GE foods which may well have unexpected, yet untraceable impacts on our health. There are **No guarantees**. The government decision shows we must now make a very important choice.

**Do we want New Zealand farms to produce GE foods?**

or

**Do we want quality GE Free foods plus organic production?**

*How can we remove GE foods from our diet?*

Look at where your food comes from:

**Supermarket:** The policy of your supermarket influences what foods are available, how they are marketed and whether they support consumer choice. Ask the manager- if you aren't happy with the response **shop elsewhere**. Some supermarkets and manufacturers have GE Free policies. The leaflet enclosed will inform you about these. The use of refined foods such as oils, sugars and starch may still continue despite a GE free policy since these ingredients do not require a label. We need to continue to encourage supermarkets and manufacturers not to use GE oils particularly.

**Food companies:** Many companies now have a GE free policy. We can

choose what we buy by choosing foods produced by these companies and leaving the others on the shelves.

Don't be tempted by the specials.

If the GE-status of a company is unclear to you – ring the 0800 Number on the label to find out and request products to be GE free.

**Food outlets and restaurants:** From 7<sup>th</sup> December 2001 you can ask food outlets if their food contains any GE ingredients. They are obliged to respond. If they are not helpful **eat elsewhere**.

**Market and local producers:** If you buy from local producers, you will often have formed a good relationship with them. Talk to them about your requirements for GE Free food and ask them to ensure their produce remains that way.

### Your Environment

**Your garden:** Maintain the GE Free status of your property. Ensure that the seeds you grow are produced by companies who only produce GE Free seeds. Buy from Koanga Gardens, GE Free/organic community gardens or save your own. If your garden becomes contaminated by patented GE plants and you grow them unwittingly, a company owning those patents could even demand a technology fee.

To help keep all our gardens GE Free, join the **GE Free register** online ([www.gefreeregister.co.nz](http://www.gefreeregister.co.nz)) or phone 09-438 8649.

Check out the site to find out just how many people have registered – the **South Island needs more registrations – tell your friends**.

Tell ERMA – our Environmental Risk Management Authority that you would like to be notified about GE Field Trials and make submissions.

Contact ERMA at 04-473-8426  
Fax: 04-473-8433 or

Email: [info@ermanız.govt.nz](mailto:info@ermanız.govt.nz)

**You can help to stop field trials.**

### GE Free news

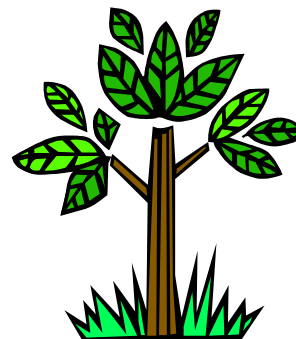
**Waitakere City** voted to become GE Free in Field and Food. The council vote was 12 to 1 led by Mayor Bob Harvey. 14.11.01

**Hastings District Council** mayor has asked the government to extend the moratorium. **Buller Council** have a 2 year moratorium on any GE outside the lab. **Hauraki Council** have a resolution against the use of GE and were writing to government to express their concerns.

**Devonport, Western Bays, Waiheke Island, Kawakawa and Far North Community Boards** have all declared GE Free.

**Nelson and Napier** have also declared GE Free status. **Rodney Council**, meanwhile, has declared organic friendly, many other councils are looking at the issue.

**GE Free the only way to be** - Tell us what your community is up to.



*Below the last log entry from recently murdered Peter Blake.*

### THE FINAL LOG

*We want to restart people caring for the environment, as it must be cared for. To win, you have to be passionate about it. You have to really "want" the result – even if this means years of work.*

*The hardest part of any big project is to begin.*

*We have begun – we are underway – we have a passion. We want to make a difference.*

*Kind regards Peter*

## GE Medicine - dreams or nightmares?

### GE Medicine - dreams or nightmares?

How can GE technology be used acceptably? Some people believe no uses are acceptable, even if kept in labs, and only involving micro-organisms. Others hope GE can be used for medicines, but still oppose using cows (and other animals) with human genes. These GE animals have been produced for what is claimed to be "medical research" but are more likely intended for industrial use.

Greater efforts are needed to address preventable diseases that are now being used as excuses for "medical" experiments. Current GE medicines made inside the laboratory include insulin for diabetics, which is processed in a patient's body. But there are also live GE vaccines that can spread beyond the body. Genetic Engineering and cloning of humans is also a threat to future generations, as commercial pressures influence birth and the human body.

There is concern over the renewed interest in 'Eugenics'- the idea that only "perfect" humans should be created: something that the Nazi regime dreamed of. There is also major concern about using GE animals as machines to produce new chemicals.

The government has refused to stop more experiments, and claim these animals will not end up in the food chain, but accidents have already happened.

The threat of new GE Medical foods is also alarming. These products are sometimes called "Nutriceuticals" and could include bananas and other fruit or vegetable containing vaccines. Who would control such products and stop them being accidentally consumed as real foods? The push to bring in GE "functional foods" is continuing despite the threat to Public Health. There are already serious medical concerns about GE foods being

sold today that often include "antibiotic resistance" markers. These marker genes are needed to find out if genetic engineering experiments have 'worked'. Doctors, including The British Medical Association and NZ Royal College of GP's, have warned this must stop. Unfortunately, no testing of GE foods is done by the authorities (ANZFA) who only "assess" foods as safe. The risk from new types of GE food is even greater.

### 180 Million Protesters Render Blow to Pharmaceutical Industry in Largest Health Referendum in History.

28.11.2001:Germany. The pharmaceutical industry's efforts to protect their trillion-dollar global market have been thwarted. Meeting with politicians from 50 countries at United Nation's "Codex Alimentarius" Commission they intended to establish global legislation to restrict access to nutritional supplements and other natural health therapies. An unprecedented outcry of protest in the largest public health referendum ever carried out in history, over 100 million protest letters were sent by people from around the world.

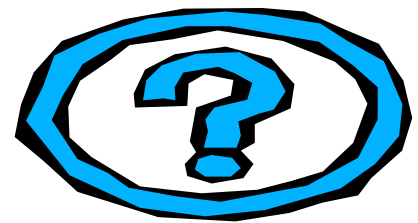
### Biotechnology Venture Hits Unexpected Snag

*Andrew Pollack, New York Times, 23.11.2001*  
On a farm near Madison, Wisconsin, are some of the world's most costly and well-protected cows. The cows have been genetically engineered to produce pharmaceuticals in their milk. But today the roughly 45 cows face an uncertain fate. The company that created them, the Pharming Group, based in the Netherlands, has run out of money and filed for protection from its creditors. Pharming's problems suggest that the dream of producing drugs in milk has begun to fade.

**PPL Therapeutics**, the Scottish firm that cloned Dolly the sheep is trying to produce drugs in milk in

**New Zealand** also nearly ran out of money before raising about \$45 million recently.

**Hepatitis Hot Potato** - Nature Biotechnology, Nov 2001, Vol 19. Cheaper alternatives to recombinant hepatitis B vaccines might be lant-based vaccines, but these are often degraded in the gut. To address this problem, researchers at the Roswell Park cancer Institute (Buffalo, NY) and the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research (Ithaca, NY) have developed a transgenic potato expressing an effective hepatitis vaccine that is protected from digestion (Proc. Natl. cad. Sci. USA 98, 11539-11544, 2001).



**'Gene gun' blazes away in biotech fight on famine** - 13.11.2001 - Reuters Jeremy Smith. Current research aims to improve food plants, the rest of the work is concerned with non-food crops such as cotton, tobacco, ornamental plants and pharmaceuticals. Scientists believe that plants can be genetically altered to grow cheap vaccines inside them, leading to the use of fruit for painless and plentiful protection against disease.

**Gene therapy statistics to date: cures-nil, deaths-6 and major adverse effects-at least a thousand.** Richard Nicholson, MD *The Bulletin of Medical Ethics* Bob Anderson, PSRG

*The potential for gene therapy to cause cancer has been predicted for many years. This is now confirmed in a new study that highlights, yet again, the dangers of unregulated, profit-driven genetic engineering. [Dr. Mae-Wan Ho](#) & [Prof. Joe Cummins](#) [www.i-sis.org](http://www.i-sis.org)*

**TAMARILLO TRIAL UPDATE**

"In October GE Free NZ and GE Free Northland agreed to cease criticism of Hort Research over the Kerikeri tamarillo trial. This was in return for both an offer to fumigate the site and access for future soil sampling. Eventually, the offer to fumigate was not taken up when there was found to be no evidence of the plant re-growth suggested by a MAF spokes-person to the press.

The access for sampling has to be according to an established scientific protocol. It is important to identify the actual plots where transgenic tamarillos were planted as opposed to the control, or where the conventional plants were planted in the trial. It is impractical to sample the whole site, and naturally we want to sample the root zones of the transgenic tamarillos where we believe GE material remains. Hort Research have been fully cooperative, and we have established a very good working relationship with the scientists concerned.

The current situation is that GE Free, GE Free NZ, and HortResearch are discussing the possibility of joint testing, using the services of Dr. Jack Heinemann, Canterbury University. This effort will go further than testing for remaining transgenic root material, and will monitor samples to see if there is any expression of that transgenic DNA in other soil micro-organisms.

We are planning a joint application to the Foundation for Research into Scientific Technology (FRST) to cover the cost of the analysis.

This is a very positive development, and GE Free members can be very satisfied to be part of such important research.....*Pat Clark.*

*GE Free New Zealand would like to express their thanks to Pat Clark, Horticultural consultant, Whangarei for his assistance,*

*advice and work, he has tirelessly put in on behalf of us all. His involvement in the RCI, tamarillo trial and other work for both GE Free NZ and GE Free Northland has been invaluable.*

**Terminator technology**- the seeds of death. Jon Carapiet  
The Royal Commission on GM recommended that New Zealand allow the use of 'Terminator' genes, which people are opposed to all over the world because of the threat to the food supply and basic rights. 'Terminator' genes are a system developed by companies to control their 'gene-patents' on seeds. 'Terminator' makes sterile seeds, which will not grow. Farmers cannot save seeds but each year must buy new ones from the company. Other systems involve the seed being inactive until a chemical sold by the company is also bought by the farmer and sprayed onto the seed. The Commission ignored ethical and other issues when it claimed 'Terminator' might slow down the spread of GE pollution.

Monsanto News for US Farmers:- **Tech Traits Today - Select Respect Protect. Quote** 'Note:- The vast majority of farmers don't pirate patented seed. The few who do disrupt a level playing field for everyone.'

**11/14/01 Tragically, New Zealand might be headin' down the transgenic treadmill.** On Oct. 31, Prime Minister Helen Clark announced that New Zealand will allow limited field trials of transgenic crops, but will push legislators to extend a moratorium on commercial release of such crops. New Zealand's leadership failed to take into account numerous associated risks. These include environmental and financial harm following genetic contamination of organic and other non-genetically modified varieties, and questions of liability. CropChoice wonders whether the

government's decision to allow field trials shows that the transnational biotech industry has unduly influenced the leaders of New Zealand in the same way it has the U.S. and Canadian governments. Organics is a growing market, why bother with transgenics? [www.cropchoice.com](http://www.cropchoice.com)

**Anti-GMO Sentiments Thrive Overseas** Rooster News Network – 26.10.2001

Early this week I worked my way through about 100 country reports from the USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS). From Poland to Korea to Australia to Mexico, GMOs are getting hit with consumer demonstrations, academic studies, government food labelling orders and outright bans. That has little to do with agricultural production. Action is being taken because the perceived issue is food safety. Corn, beans, potatoes or tomatoes, if consumers eat it they want a voice. And they are getting it around the world.

**Dr William Rolleston, Life Sciences Network**, chairman and vocal proponent of the "responsible use of genetic modification", likens Auckland's T-shirt billboard's populist style of advertising to that of propaganda in Nazi Germany. **Life Sciences Network Francis Wevers** quote RMLA conference, Wellington. 6.10.01 "GM science will allow us to be flexible, innovative and responsive to threats to soil and climate, But all this for nothing as the eco-Talebans sacrifice our economy on the basis that there might be a risk on a geological time scale." **"Freedom of expression - Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and opinions of any kind in any form."** -- Section 14, New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990.

**Cost of segregating GM food falling** – Greenpeace EU: 3.12.2001 (Reuters) BRUSSELS Environment group Greenpeace said last week the separation of GM soybeans from traditional varieties would not be hugely expensive and that costs were falling.

The European Commission has devised the traceability system as part of a new farm-to-fork approach to food safety, and to appease member states' concerns over GM food, which has led to no new varieties being approved in the EU for three years. "The reality of companies with practical experience of purchasing food or feed ingredients is that, after an initial cost of implementing an IP system, the follow-on costs become negligible," Greenpeace said.

**Costs of not segregating just get worse.** Japan and other Asian countries have slashed U.S. corn imports by as much as 45 percent. "...the U.S. grain industry will never stay competitive, if it doesn't respond to customer demands by providing identity preserved, non-GMO corn" Dan McGuire, director of the American Corn Growers Assoc. "The only truly safe seed selection will be seed corn free of any genetic modification" said A.E. Staley Manufacturing Co. in a letter to 1,200 of its corn suppliers. <http://members.tripod.com/~ngin/farming.htm> for more info.

**50% of US Grain Handlers Plan to Segregate GE & Non-GE Grains** October 23, 2001

**USDA data suggest that average per acre chemical use on RR corn acres has risen** from about 2.5 pounds in 1999 to 2.75 pounds in 2000 (Benbrook, 2001b). On conventional acres, about 2.25 pounds were applied in 1999 and 2.08 pounds in 2000. Accordingly, in 2000 the average RR corn acre was treated with about 30% more herbicide than the average non-GM corn acre." [www.biotech-info.net](http://www.biotech-info.net).

**"GMO Liability Threats for Farmers,"** US paper by David Moeller, staff attorney at the Farmers' Legal Action Group, Inc. based in Minnesota says "Farmers and seed companies who are responsible for genetically contaminating neighbouring fields might be liable for a neighbour's damages based on tort claims of trespass to land, nuisance, negligence, or strict liability" Farmers are being sued for having GMOs on their property that they did not buy, do not want, will not use and cannot sell," says North Dakota farmer, Tom Wiley. "If I contaminate my neighbour's property, I am held responsible. Farmers need legal protections to ensure that if the biotech industry contaminates their crops with GMOs, the industry is held responsible." See GE Food Alert website - [www.gefoodalert.org](http://www.gefoodalert.org)

**Transgenic Pollution by Horizontal Gene Transfer** Landraces of indigenous maize growing in remote regions in Mexico have been found contaminated with transgenic DNA. Molecular analysis suggests horizontal gene transfer mediated by CaMV 35S promoter. [www.iss.org/TransgenicPollution.php](http://www.iss.org/TransgenicPollution.php)

**Bayer acquire reviled Aventis Cropscience from life sciences co.** Aventis. 2.10.2001 Aventis, turning its attention to pharmaceuticals now hopes to shed its image as the firm responsible for mass contamination of food with un-approved GM Starlink corn across the US and Asia. Australian GM 'police' checked all AVENTIS GM canola sites after problems after a refusal by Aventis for even 15m buffer zones! Banned Aventis GM plants were even dumped in a public tip! Aventis, was fined \$33 million for fraud (22.10.01) by US public health authorities [www.ngin.org.uk](http://www.ngin.org.uk) The UK Government has told biotech giant Aventis to stop GM weeds growing without consent in a Lincolnshire field. [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)

**UK demand for organics Tesco sets £1bn target for organics** 1.11.2001 Tesco today announced it wanted to increase sales of organic products to £1bn within five years. The supermarket giant said it would be introducing hundreds of new products and cutting the price of many existing lines. <http://money.guardian.co.uk/news/story/0,6449,584834,00.html>

**India to destroy illegally grown GM crops** INDIA: 23.11.2001 Authorities in India's western Gujarat state have begun procurement of illegally grown gene-engineered cotton from farmers to prevent replanting of the seeds, officials said yesterday. <http://www.planetark.org/dailynewstory.cfm/newsid/13424/story.htm>

**Victory for GM campaigners again!** <http://www.ngin.org.uk> After waiting over a year for trial after cutting down GM crops in Herefordshire, Jim and Barbara were found not guilty in a jury trial. Jim Ridout, Defendant and Hereford resident stated "For the Government to carry on with these GM crop trials is flying in the face of democracy. Surely now they should abandon these trials and adopt the precautionary principle."

**Prove you're GM-free, Australian farmers told** Boyd Champness GLOBAL food-processing giant Unilever has told Australian farmers they must provide proof that their crops are free of genetic modification if they want to continue supplying to the company. Unilever heads a number of major food processors who are insisting that farmers, trucking firms and even seed suppliers establish vast paper trials to identify and prove ingredients derived from oilseeds, pulses and, soon potatoes are not genetically modified. **U.S.scientist conduct world's first confined field test of a GE insect.** <http://www.wired.com/news/>

## Regional news from around the country

**As thousands took to the streets around the country, the government made a decision to continue with genetic engineering trials in New Zealand. The decision is a concern for many including those who support democracy as it shows a blatant disregard for public opinion.**

The public support for a GE-Free NZ grew rapidly after the Royal Commission supported field trials/releases with "caution".

A National day of action July 27<sup>th</sup> saw thousands involved. On Aug 30<sup>th</sup> the brave couple who had walked from Christchurch with their 2 children arrived at parliament. On September 1<sup>st</sup> the largest march in 20 years went through Auckland centre in the rain.

On Sept 4<sup>th</sup> a GE Free petition with 11,600 signatures was delivered to Marian Hobbs and on October 6<sup>th</sup> the largest GE Free sandwich in the world was put together in front of several thousand in Wellington as around the country people came out to show solidarity yet again. Soils from around the country were presented at Parliament on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct and banners signed by thousands wrapped the beehive on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Hundreds arrived in Wellington in support of the GE Free Hikoi on Oct 31st.**

The Hikoi, organised with support of the GE Free Coalition and tangata whenua (people of the land) throughout Aotearoa gave people in rural areas an opportunity to show support for the growing GE-free movement and called for a complete ban on GE. "We have been listening to our people as we travel south and it is very clear that our kaumatua want a GE-free Aotearoa," said organiser KeiMunro. The Labour Maori caucus, also expressed their opposition to any decision to lift the moratorium on field trials and the commercial release of genetically modified crops. "The government has a responsibility to protect the taonga of their Treaty

partner," said Dell Wihongi, kaumatua for the hikoi, niece to Dame Awhina Cooper. Banners signed by thousands throughout the country were presented at Parliament. Alannah Currie had an exhibition of photos of thousands against GE at Queens Wharf in November inviting all top come face to face with those 'Staking our claim - for a GE Free Aotearoa.'

GE Free NZ had a successful AGM in September and got several new area coordinators as a result.

**GE FREE KAPITI** - A proposal District Plan change making the growing of GE plants a prohibited activity went to two committees and back to full council with a recommendation to defer a decision until after the Government's October 29 announcement. It remains on the incoming Council's agenda. Our four Community Boards were asked to consider declaring its own ward GE Free, this too remains on the agenda. Our neighbouring District Council Horowhenua has adopted 10 recommendations to prevent field trials from taking place. We hosted a lunch for the North Auckland Hikoi on their way to Parliament. It was a very warm experience of sharing our common views and hearing from our new Mayor, Alan Milne, who describes himself as "having a foot each side of a barbed-wire fence." He seems open to listening and signed the group's GE Free banner. We expect to focus our campaign on GE food next year. We aim to campaign to add to the GE Free register and sell "Proud to be GE Free signs." *B.Mountier*

**GROUNDSWELL** - Since the release of Royal Commission on Genetic Modifications report in late July 2001 which largely rejected the scientific dangers of GE and the majority of peoples health, moral, ethical and spiritual objections to GE and GMOs in our food and environment the Groundswell

committee has organised rallies, developed public education resources, promoted the GE Free Property Register, lobbied politicians and worked with the nationwide GE Free coalition. Groundswell's main priorities for the next phase of the GE Free campaign here in Canterbury will include:-

### **Local Government Councils**

Lobbying District/City Councils and Environment Canterbury councillors to try and ban GMOs in the environment through the Resource Management Act. Person to person lobbying, neighbourhood, community board members and elected councillors. The key to our strategy is to encourage lots more people to join the GE Free Register.

**Public Education** Groundswell continues holding public stalls and meetings to inform the public.

### **Lobby Central Government**

Groundswell will continue to lobby politicians at central government level, informing the public of the GE issues at stake in the run up to the election in 2002.

*Tremaine Barr*

**NELSON** - We are involved with the day to day running of the national office and have weekly stall on the market. Our most recent action was a very successful "GE free supermarket tour" to assist shoppers on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec. in regard to GE labelling.

We could do with more volunteers to share the load. Our main aim involves assisting the public with GE Free food choices and continuing to promote GE Free in our area up until the election. *S.Lees*

### **GE FREE NORTHLAND**

continued their sterling work over the past few months with both the tamarillo trial and submissions to council they have still involved themselves with many actions and joined in with others, for example the hikoi.

Zelka is an inspiration to us all - thank for your input this year.

### GE FREE HAWKES BAY

An active group has met this year in Te Awanga. We have sent letters, lobbied local councils, organised public meetings, distributed information, joined in national GE Free campaign events and held stalls (Hawke's Bay show Haumoana market, Flaxmere, Hastings, Napier) to raise public awareness. On October 6<sup>th</sup>, we marched from Napier to Hastings taking the GE Free message across the Bay. We also sent soil and a banner to Parliament.

### Napier was declared GE Free on September 9<sup>th</sup>

The issue is alive in Hawke's Bay. We have a weekly GE Free Napier update in the Napier community paper. Chantal Foods in Napier and Cornucopia in Hastings sell stickers, Greenpeace True Food Guides and "Proud to be GE Free" signs and we continue to send letters to local councils.

We now meet with Central Hawke's Bay campaigners to unify the Hawke's Bay campaign. With much work to be done, we need new energy next year. Please get in touch and let us know how you would like to help. With many different roles for people to fill – photocopying, writing letters, delivering pamphlets, making posters, organising meetings/ stalls, if you want to do something, and if you haven't got time, then donations are much appreciated. Keep informed about GE and local events, subscribe to GE Free HB egroup [odile@xtra.co.nz](mailto:odile@xtra.co.nz)

Thanks to all the people who came to meetings and helped to raise awareness. Do not underestimate what you can do. The more of us there are, the more we can achieve. It is election year in 2002. This needs to be one of the biggest issues on the agenda. *Odile Balas*

### AUCKLAND UPDATE

The Auckland branch of GE-Free NZ has been heavily involved with the Auckland GE-Free coalition that formed after the Royal Commission released its report.

The Coalition organised the massive rally on September 1<sup>st</sup>, estimated by the City Council to have numbered 15,000 people. This enormous show of support for a GE-Free future in food and field should have been a wake-up call to the Labour government, instead they have pushed on with an agenda that ignores the option of keeping GE uses in containment and under ethical controls. The October 6<sup>th</sup> National Day of Action was celebrated in Auckland by wrapping the town-hall with banners. Later put together with those from the Hikoi, they were presented to the Governor General's representative in Wellington.

The news that Waitakere City had declared a GE-Free Zone was a welcome inspiration for people wanting to do the same elsewhere, and Mayor Bob Harvey's connections to the Labour party may offer some hope for the future. On Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December- launch-date for the so-called GE-labelling regime- there was a "Naked Chef" protest at Mt Albert Pak N Save, calling for "Pam's" to stop using GE ingredients, or at least label them so customers were not misled. Other events are planned and both individuals and groups supporting the coalition will continue with their own activities. We need more people to help with the Auckland branch. Can you help? Contact any groups you know to arrange a speaker from GE-Free NZ to come and discuss the issues at their next meeting? Could you put up a display in the local library if we supply the material? Can you help organise our telephone-tree and call members about important events?

If you can get involved please call Dianna on 09 378 8945.

Disclaimer- We are not liable for any error, omission or fact, or misinterpretation given in this publication, nor any action taken upon the information given.

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**T.Shirts GE Free T shirts 4 sizes unbleached cotton made in New Zealand and handprinted with rainbow logo - \$20.00 incl. P&P Support the cause [gefree@ts.co.nz](mailto:gefree@ts.co.nz) Or write to PO Box 693 Nelson.**

GE Free NZ promote submissions on the amendment to the HSNO Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act and ERMA when applications for GE field trials start becoming publicly notified. **To be advised of new applications for GE field trials** you can put your name on the ERMA mailing list by contacting ERMA, PO Box 131 Wellington, Ph 04 473 8426 [www.ermanz.govt.nz](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz)

**Submissions on HSNO Act amendments are due on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2002. Copies available from Bennetts or contact your area rep.**