



GE Free New Zealand

in Food and Environment (RAGE) Inc.

June Newsletter

Welcome to the #5 June 2000 issue of GE Free NZ
We hope you will find it informative, keeping you up
to date on issues surrounding genetic engineering
in New Zealand.

***** LABELLING *****

GE food in NZ is STILL unlabelled, we are being denied the right to choose; this may have adverse affects on our health, and has been proven to have negative impact on the environment.

We were assured last year that mandatory labelling would be forthcoming. Yet there has been another delay this year. Our Health Minister Annette King will be meeting with other Australian Health Ministers, at an ANZFA meeting in Wellington on **July 28th**. It is once again up to the public to apply pressure for comprehensive labelling.

Write to Annette King or PM Helen Clark (Parliament, Wellington) and attend the **PROTEST** to be held outside the meeting venue. Watch our website for more details.

An Australian Minister of Agriculture aims to restrict labelling of GE food saying it is **'too tough on industry.'** This reflects the huge pressure from US administration and their decision not to label in the USA.

"The NZ Government should resist calls for unilateral implementation of a mandatory labelling regime on food products containing GE ingredients" – says Life Sciences Network.

However, Annette King, says "NZ is ready to label. The problem has been at the Australian end." Foods containing 5 percent of GM foods should be labelled?

Consumers need to make their voices heard now!
Lots of letters and phone calls are needed to say we support a zero threshold, and mandatory labelling decisions that were proposed last year by the ANZFSC

Talk to your supermarket managers and ring 0800 No's of food manufacturers today, ask them to address your concerns as a consumer, (particularly Nestles, who have been boycotted for the last year but refuse to go GE Free in NZ despite going GE Free in Europe and Hong Kong). Fill your trolleys and ask if your purchases are GE Free, if they cannot guarantee they are, leave them on the counter. It worked in the UK, where food is now labelled.

ANZFA ministers meeting on the 27/28 July in Wellington
GE Free NZ AGM is 27 August 2000 in Wellington,
Venue to be advised. GE Free plans PROTEST.
For details contact
04 475 9640

CREATION HOLDS THE COPYRIGHT

...Man has no right to transform the essence of life in complete ignorance of the long-term consequences, which reach far beyond the life times of man.

Man destroys his own origins, his own future, his own existence, which depends on an infinity of surrounding and carefully interwoven genetic laws.

Every being and living manifestation on earth, if butterflies, flowers, trees, fruit, fungus, animals from microbes to elephants, has a superior function which reaches far beyond the usefulness and the utility for man.

It reaches far beyond the comprehension of man.

...Man in his greed forgets that he himself is dependent on these delicately interwoven gifts of nature and creation which come out of an incredible fantastic treasury which is off-limits to man.

If man kills the power who supports him, if man vandalises this treasury which makes his life possible on earth, he destroys himself.

Genetic manipulation triggers the hitherto most stupid of all human mass suicides.

(R.I.P.) Written by Hundertwasser 4 Nov 1999 N Z

THE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY (RCI)

- **Royal Commission into genetic modification**
Chief Justice, **Sir Thomas Eichelbaum**, will head the RCI. The other members of the Commission are
- **Dr Jean Fleming**, Senior Lecturer at the Dept of Anatomy and Structural Biology, Otago Medical School. Highly qualified in the field of Biochemistry, Physiology & Structural Biology,
- **Rt Rev Richard Randerson**, from Auckland, brings a solid understanding of ethical issues and religious studies and
- **Dr Jacqueline Allan**, an Auckland GP, is experienced in Maori medical health.

A Royal Commission has the highest status & greatest independence, and will be required to consult widely, and to adopt procedures that encourage a diverse range of people and groups (researchers, industry, the Maori community, public interest groups and ordinary citizens) to participate in the proceedings and present their views. I hope that the Royal Commission will use its resources to gain a comprehensive insight into what the whole of the nation wants for the future with respect to genetic modification.

The primary objective of the RCI is to inquire into and report on strategic options available to enable New Zealand to address genetic modification now and in the future.

It will look at genetic modification in a broad context which encompasses:

- modern genetic modification technologies
- genetically modified organisms and their offspring, and
- the products that are derived from GMO's like genetically modified food products.

The RCI will consider the following:

- the extent to which genetic modification is being used in New Zealand at present
- information and the uncertainties about future application of genetic modification in New Zealand
- the risks and benefits from GMO's and their products
- the international obligations New Zealand faces with regard to genetic modification
- liability and intellectual property issues involving genetic modification
- the Crown's responsibilities under the Treaty of Waitangi in relation to genetic modification
- the global developments and issues that may influence New Zealand
- the opportunities that may be open to NZ from the use or avoidance of genetic modification technologies.

The Commission will also look into the areas of public interest including human health, environmental and economic issues, and cultural and ethical concerns.

The Moratorium:

Throughout the RCI and for 3 months after, the Government is asking all those involved in field testing or seeking to release a GMO, to agree to a voluntary moratorium. The moratorium represents a balancing act of responding to public concerns about risks from GMO's, ensuring that any risks are minimised, and not irreparably disturbing research in New Zealand. There is every indication that our research community will take a responsible attitude and comply with the moratorium. However, I would sound a warning that if someone does choose to be irresponsible and not comply, the Government reserves the right to legislate. We will be very carefully monitoring the controls placed on any field trials. **For full details I encourage you to visit my website www.mfe.govt.nz.**

Hon Marian Hobbs at Te Papa, N Z Govt 6/05/00

RCI GEARING UP FOR JUNE 20

The \$4.8 million Royal Commission of Inquiry into Genetic Modification, due to report back to the Government on June 1 next year, is preparing for an initial meeting on June 20th for several days to get preliminary briefings from experts on aspects of the inquiry. Sir Thomas Eichelbaum stated "After that meeting we will ... indicate what our programme is in broad outline."

The commission will devote a large proportion of its time from mid-November to March to the actual hearing of submissions.

"I think the bulk of our sittings will be in Wellington, but we will certainly take the commission travelling," he said. The commission will notify its plans and call a preliminary public meeting, probably in July.

Kent Atkinson of NZPA , May 31

Apparently submissions will be taken in Sept, we hope everyone receiving a newsletter will feel empowered to write of their concerns to the Royal Commission. Look for more info in our next edition.

ANZFA has a legal obligation to determine risks of new foods such as GE foods. Despite repeated requests to ANZFA, including direct communication with Ian Lindenmayer, Managing Director of ANZFA, they have been unable to provide a single risk analysis for any food. They have wonderful risk analysis methodology, but it has never been used. With regard to GE food, ANZFA have relied solely on analysis undertaken by so called 'Life Sciences' companies, who stand to make huge profits.

LIFE SCIENCES NETWORK PRAISES GOVT FOR COMMITMENT TO RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

The Minister for Research, Science and Technology is committed to increasing funding for research, science and technology to 0.8% of GDP by 2010. This is a real shot in the arm for the science sector in New Zealand, the Chairman of the New Zealand Life Sciences Network (Inc), Dr William Rolleston said this week.

NZ Life Sciences Network, a well funded pro GE group are gearing up for the RCI, seeking help from Canada, aided by TradeNZ. www.lifesciencenz.com

EUROPEAN ACTION TO FIGHT PATENTS ON LIFE

Sign the petition before 30 July www.ecoropa.org/brevets or phone France 00 33 143 383817. An agreement on Intellectual Property could be reached within the WTO (World Trade Organisation). If implemented, the patenting of living plants and animals will be virtually unstoppable.

ERMA UNCOVERS UNAUTHORISED GE EXPERIMENTS

Recent breaches of GE experimentation were found in a quarter of Crown Research Institutes (CRI's) and Universities; using biological safety committees to oversee GE experiments under ERMA. Rulings found over ¼ (113) of all experiments were unauthorised (without necessary approvals). "However much of this, including work at Massey and Otago universities, results from changes in the technical nature of the modification, that go beyond the bounds of the original approval of the experiment," Dr Walker (ERMA) said. "The next step was to do a detailed analysis of those cases to identify the exact nature of the work involved and any potential risks."

Students, upset by a halt to their research, and scientists have complained to ERMA, suggesting that their 'contained' and 'safe' research shouldn't be subject to such stringent rulings. Given until the 24th May to clean up their act; no institutions have been either prosecuted or fined despite the fact that they could gain financially from some of this research.

These inadequacies point out the cavalier attitude of scientists involved in GE, and reinforce the need for these regulations to remain in place. For a fully legislated moratorium (not merely a voluntary one), on GE experiments in our environment to be implemented during the RCI. (ERMA has approved all GE field trials to date.)

ERMA HEARING FOR GE SHEEP April 2000

The last application before ERMA was from CRI AgResearch, involving the use of a 'defective' gene to increase muscling in sheep. Originally described as a benefit to meat production, this application 'proposes' to bring unlimited (but unproven) medical benefits.

2 ½ months later, the hearing has not 'closed' but has in effect 'adjourned', while ERMA considers their decision.

'NOTHING HELD SACRED'

Prince Charles, in a Reith lecture spoke of the need to "work with nature" and warned of the dire consequences of ignoring the "essential unity" of the living and spiritual worlds. He says his concerns are rooted in the need to safeguard the divinely-created Earth.

"If literally nothing is held sacred any more - because it is considered synonymous with superstition or in some other way 'irrational' - what is there to prevent us treating our entire world as some great laboratory of life with potentially disastrous long-term consequences?"

He welcomes a "precautionary approach" to scientific advances, mocking those who portray this as a sign of weakness or an attempt to halt progress. The prince's swipes at biotechnology may prompt a further rift between St James's Palace and the government, which continues to support GM technology.

www.bbc.co.uk Reith 2000

CONTROVERSY RAGES AS GE CANOLA SEED CONTAMINATES THOUSANDS OF ACRES IN EUROPE

The UK govt was recently alerted by the German government, who last month conducted random checks of seed.

One MP called for the agriculture minister's resignation for failing to protect the food supply against genetically modified seeds. The Ministry of Agriculture admitted that large quantities of GM oilseed rape have been sown by accident on up to 600 farms - some 30,000 acres. MAFF waited one month after being approached by Advanta - to make a public statement. MPs were furious that it took MAFF so long to go public.

In March 2000, Greenpeace requested information ensuring compliance with EU legislation from major European seed companies, receiving no reply from Advanta.

This seed company now faces potential lawsuits for millions of dollars; last year they decided to move conventional seed production to New Zealand because of its GE Free status.

Farmers involved thought that they had planted conventional seed. Their Government's policy is not to allow GM crops to be grown commercially at least until 2003, after current farm-scale trials and other studies have been completed.

The EU's GE approval process, deadlocked for over two years, allows no authorizations as new regulations are drawn up. (New EU laws governing GE seeds are expected in autumn.) Regulations would follow similar rules to food products, where products with ingredients containing more than 1% of GE are labelled.

In Britain, the finding occurred as Prince Charles cautioned against "the artificial and uncontained transfer of genes between species of plants and animals."

Reuters, Daily Telegraph, New York Times May 18/19

FIRMS MOVE TO AVOID RISK OF CONTAMINATION.

SOME of the world's biggest seed companies are moving their operations to countries free of genetically modified production to reduce the risk of contamination. Advanta, the company at the centre of the storm over

GM impurities in the British oilseed rape crop said that it had abandoned producing seed in Western Canada because the risk of cross pollination from GM crops was now too high. David Buckridge, European business director, said some production had been moved to **New Zealand**, where there is no GE production. **'NZ stands to gain by maintaining our current ban on commercial GE crops'**.
Tricia Allen, Greenpeace

Pioneer Hi-Bred, which supplies maize, has enforced a similar strategy after worries that GM impurities in supposedly non GM seeds were soaring.

Greenpeace has said that between 5 and 15 per cent of the European maize crop may contain GM impurities.

A spokesman for the Pioneer's British operations, said that too many GM crops were being grown in parts of North America. This led to a rising risk of cross-pollination from GM to non GM seed production and mixing of seeds at packing centres.

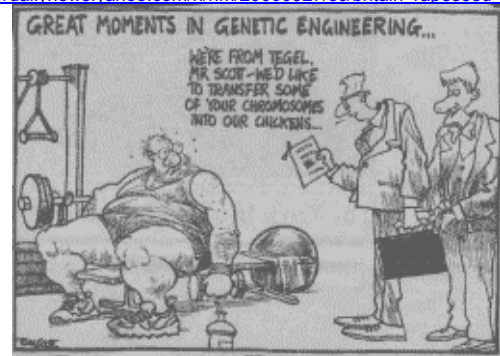
The Times

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/news/pages/tim/2000/05/29/timnwsnws01017.html>

FARMERS MULL LEGAL MOVE AGAINST GOVT ON SEED

British farmers who unwittingly planted genetically modified seeds are considering legal action against the government after it advised them to destroy contaminated crops but refused compensation, officials said. LONDON (Reuters) 27.5.00

http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/nm/20000527/sc/britain_rapeseed_1.html



GM TRIALS THREATEN UK HONEY. BEE KEEPERS MOVE HIVES AWAY FROM GM SITES

Friends of the Earth is calling for an immediate ban on the outdoor testing of genetically modified oilseed rape and maize after shop-bought honey was found to contain GM pollen. FOE sent honey to Austria for analysis. The honey was purchased in an area where GM crops were grown last year. GM oilseed rape pollen was found in beehives over 2 and a half miles from the nearest GM trial site.

The British beekeeping industry is taking steps to ensure that its honey is free from GM contamination, advising its members to move hives at least 6 miles from the nearest GM trial site. If GM crops get full commercial approval, GM sites locations will not have to be made public.

The discovery of honey containing GM pollen confirms fears that GM crops threaten livelihoods of neighbouring farmers and beekeepers, not consulted about GM sites.

The UK beekeeping industry produces an estimated 10 million worth of honey a year - the value of pollination of fruit and other crops is 20x more valuable.

FOE GM press release: 16 May 2000

RESEARCHER FOUND GENE'S TRANSFER FROM GE RAPESEED TO BACTERIA AND FUNGI IN HONEY BEES GUT

Prof. Hans-Hinrich Kaatz (Institute of Bee Research) at the University of Jena, experimented over three years with honey bees on an experimental field of transgenic rapeseed in Saxony, Germany.

The field trial was performed by AgrEvo; the rapeseed (canola) engineered to resist the herbicide glufosinate (Liberty, Basta). This pollen was fed to young honey bees in the laboratory. (Pollen is the natural diet of young bees which need a high protein diet). Micro-organisms from the bees' gut contents were grown on growth medium, where the gene that confers resistance to the herbicide was found. "This finding is highly alarming and should be taken very seriously." said Ulrike Riedel of the German Health Ministry.

This raises new concerns over the unwanted spread of genetic codes, including antibiotic resistance used in GE crops. The study shows once again how little we know about this science and adds strength to calls for a **Global Moratorium on all GE crops!**

The research suggests that all types of bacteria could become contaminated by genes used in genetically modified technology, including those that live inside the human digestive system. If this happened, it could have an impact on the bacteria's vital role in helping the human body fight disease, aid digestion and facilitate blood clotting.

Dr Mae-Wan Ho, geneticist at Open University and a critic of GM technology, has no doubts about the dangers. She said: 'These findings are very worrying and provide the first real evidence of what many have feared. Everybody is keen to exploit GM technology, but nobody is looking at the risk of horizontal gene transfer. 'We are playing about with genetic structures that existed for millions of years and the experiment is running out of control.'

One of the biggest concerns is if the antibiotic resistant gene used in some GM crops crossed over to bacteria. 'If this happened it would leave us unable to treat major illnesses like meningitis and E coli.'

US REJECTS MANDATORY FOOD LABELLING

The Clinton Administration has decided that GE ingredients would not have to be identified on US food labels. An FDA spokesman said 'The scientific evidence does not show that these products are any different from a health and safety standpoint.' Having approved 50 varieties of GE foods, the government has adopted industry-backed steps to assure the public the products are safe. Pepsico shareholders on the same day, rejected a proposal to stop using GE ingredients. Frito-Lay, citing consumer concern has recently told its farmers not to use GE corn. Gerber baby food have banned GE crops in their products. *On May 9 in Chicago at the convention of the Food Marketing Institute, a trade association of supermarket corporations, a number of leading supermarket chains admitted privately that mandatory labeling of GE foods is probably inevitable.*

Nestle (NZ) has been identified as particularly unhelpful to customers trying to find out which products contain GE ingredients. Instead of guaranteeing products like Milo are GE-free, as many customers have asked, the

company has simply responded with misleading information.

A recent survey by David Russell of the Consumer Institute, showed the grocery industry is in disarray on how to answer consumer queries. The issue is a subject of complaint under the Fair Trading Act sent to Phillida Bunkle, the Minister of Consumer Affairs.

"Nestle advertises products like Milo as if nothing has changed, but if we are giving Milo to our children we want to know that Milo is GE-Free." said Mary Anne Howard-Clarke, national spokesperson for GE Free NZ. "Instead of saying whether Milo contains GE ingredients or not, Nestle sidesteps the issue and send you a copy of an article from the National Business Review, singing the praises of GE!"

STORES CRITICISED FOR GM-FREE LEAFLETS BBC

Finding GM-free food is not straightforward for UK shoppers. Two leading supermarkets, criticised for misleading consumers over food safety have withdrawn leaflets promoting their own organic and GM-free food. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has said Iceland played on customers' fear of genetically-modified food in a brochure promoting its own GM-free products, also attacking Tesco for exaggerating the advantages of organic food, in a brochure promoting its own organic range. Tesco has apologised, although Iceland, the first supermarket to ban genetically modified ingredients from its brand products, is challenging the ruling. *10 MAY, 2000*

THE WORST NIGHTMARES OF MONSANTO AND THE GENE GIANTS ARE BECOMING REALITY.

The four year food fight by European consumers and farmers is slowly but surely driving genetically engineered foods and crops off the EU market, the largest in the world. US corn exports to the EU have fallen from \$360 million a year to near zero, while soybean exports have fallen from \$2.6 billion annually to \$1 billion - and are expected to fall even further as major food processors, supermarkets, and fast-food chains ban GE soy or soy derivatives in animal feeds.

Canada's canola exports to Europe similarly have fallen from \$500 million a year to near zero. Meanwhile Brazilian exporters are doing a brisk business selling "GE-free" soybeans to European buyers, and organic food is booming throughout the industrialized world.



WHY THEY DON'T WANT TO LABEL

Japanese importers and manufacturers of many common food products - including tofu, miso, cornstarch, corn snacks, popcorn and frozen or canned corn, are almost certain to switch to non-genetically engineered ingredients once they're forced to label. James Echle, who directs the Tokyo office of the American Soybean Association, told the Star Tribune "I don't think anybody will label containers genetically modified," he said. "It's like putting a skull and crossbones on your product."

Sharon Schmickle in the Minneapolis Star-Tribune. April 30

GENETICALLY ALTERED SOYA PRODUCE LOWER YIELDS

A 2 year study by University of Nebraska researchers shows soybeans genetically altered to resist herbicide, produced lower yields than conventional soybeans. The NU Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources study showed Roundup Ready soybeans yield 6% less than their closest relatives and 11% less than high-yielding soybean varieties. "This is completely contrary to the body of research done by Monsanto and independent sources," said public affairs director for Monsanto. The seed ALSO costs about \$7.50 per bag more than conventional bean seed.

The Associated Press State & Local Wire, 17.5.00

VEGGI WITH A RAT GENE

A rat gene has been introduced in broccolini, a cross between broccoli and a Chinese kale, to enhance vitamin C levels. Containing up to 7 times the vitamin C, similar experiments may be successful with other plants, eg. rice, tomato. *Mol. Breed. (2000) 6.73-78*

GM RICE FREE TO POOR FARMERS

Biotech inventors of rice genetically modified to combat Vitamin A blindness have signed a deal with AstraZeneca that will give Third World farmers free access to the grain. Aiming to improve its image at a time of unprecedented public hostility toward genetic engineering. The company, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, Swiss government and European Union, hope to sell it commercially in the developed world.

"Golden rice" is the most high profile of a "second generation" of GE crops being developed around the world. The inventors will distribute the rice free to government-run breeding centres in China, India and other rice-dependent Asian nations.

Six weeks ago, US biotech giant Monsanto said it would make a "working draft" of the rice genome freely available. *Financial Times (London) 16.5. 2000*

THE DEATH OF FRANKENSPUDS.

Monsanto announced in early May that they were closing down their Nature Mark plant in Crystal, Maine, a transgenic laboratory and greenhouse operation that had been producing Bt potatoes since 1992. Bt potatoes are gene-spliced with the soil bacteria, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, to repel the Colorado potato beetle. Earlier this year, Monsanto laid off 20 of the 30 employees in their other Bt potato lab in Idaho. Bt potatoes thus join the growing obituary list of Monsanto's Frankenfoods. In 1996 Monsanto Calgene's Flavr Savr tomatoes were

taken off the market after dismal performances in the field and on grocery store shelves.

Monsanto's retreat on Bt potatoes comes in the wake of news stories in the Wall Street Journal and Associated Press that America's leading potato buyers, including McDonald's, Burger King, Frito-Lay, and Procter & Gamble, are eliminating Bt potatoes from their brand-name french fries and potato chips.

"We have to respect the preferences of our customers, and both the domestic and global restaurant chains which we serve have asked us to exclude these potatoes," said Fred Zerza, a spokesman for J.R. Simplot, of Boise, Idaho, one of McDonald's largest suppliers. Next year Bt spuds may become an extinct species.

"There are two things that most of us feel. We feel hurt and we feel angry... We had real leadership... We had... faith in this science when others were dubious, and it all seemed to be working. So we painted a big bull's-eye on our chest, and we went over the top of the hill."

Robert Shapiro, CEO of Monsanto, quoted in The New Yorker

RESISTANCE TO GE AROUND THE WORLD

Opposition to GE foods increases in Canada. A nationwide campaign against Loblaw's, the nation's largest supermarket chain, has the food industry worried. On May 9 the Council of Canadians, Sierra Club, and a coalition of public interest groups filed a legal petition against the federal government for failing to protect public health and the environment in regulating genetically modified organisms. The law requires the government to respond within 120 days. On March 31, a poll conducted for the Council of Canadians, found 75% of Canadians familiar with GE foods are worried about their safety and 95% want GE foods labelled as such.

95% want consumers to be able to buy non-GE foods, and 71% would be willing to pay more. 56% are not confident in the federal government's ability to protect their health and safety when it comes to GE foods - although grocery retailers say they depend on consumer confidence in government testing.

THE NEEM TREE PATENT

In a vital victory against biopiracy, the patent (granted to US multinational W.R.Grace) on the Neem tree has recently been revoked by the European Patent Office. In India the Neem tree is used for clothing, medicine, food, shelter and even for toothbrushes. It is also believed to have spiritual powers. Many opposed this patent, regarding it as an attempt to commercialise 'common property'. A formal objection was lodged 5 years ago by the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology in Delhi, the Federation for Organic Movements and a Belgian MEP. **This is a landmark for campaigners opposing 'patents on life'**. Biotech corporations fear that the revocation of the Neem patent will set a precedent that could put billions of dollars of their "biopirated" patents on drugs and seeds at risk. *Ecologist-June, 2000*

In 1999 there were already 631 patents on life forms, 56% US owned. A French company has patented a variant of the NZ Pohutukawa tree.

ANTI-GE PROTESTS INCREASE IN THE US.

Four thousand people demonstrated against GE foods in Boston, Massachusetts on March 26, marching in front of the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) national convention. Over the past three months "Frankenfoods dumps outside supermarkets in Boston, San Francisco, and at the annual shareholders meeting of the Safeway supermarket chain, organized by the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) and Friends of the Earth, have generated significant media coverage and rattled the nerves of the biotech industry. Meanwhile sabotage of biotech crops has continued in the US, with an April 8 announcement by the "Petaluma Pruners" that they had destroyed GE grape plants grown by the Vinifera corporation in Petaluma, California.

ANTI-GE PROTESTERS, LED BY A GROUP CALLED GRAIN R.A.G.E. (Resistance Against Genetic Engineering), wearing white biohazard suits and respirators, blocked the road to the Cargill corporation's international headquarters outside Minneapolis for several hours. Cargill, the world's largest grain dealer, is one of the most strident proponents of GE crops.

In September Cargill donated \$10 million to the University of Minnesota for a plant genetics research facility. Cargill also has strong ties to Monsanto. Cargill sold its international seed business to Monsanto in 1998 and has agreed to manufacture commercial livestock and poultry feeds produced from Monsanto's proprietary germ plasm.

March 21 2000

THE CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY, THE OCA, GREENPEACE AND 51 OTHER GROUPS FILED A LEGAL PETITION AGAINST THE FDA IN WASHINGTON, D.C. calling for a moratorium on all GE foods and crops unless the FDA can prove through stringent, long-term safety-testing that these products are safe for human health and the environment. For further information on the legal petition see www.foodsafetynow.org

March 21 2000

WASHINGTON, 52 MEMBERS OF THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES co-sponsored a bill introduced by Dennis Kucinich (Democrat from Ohio) calling for mandatory labelling of GE foods. Kucinich has also drafted a House bill on safety-testing. The Kucinich GE labeling bill has drawn angry criticism from the biotech industry, agribusiness, and the Grocery Manufacturers of America, who maintain that mandatory labelling would unduly alarm consumers and thereby kill the industry. Companion bills on safety testing (Patrick Moynihan, Democrat from New York) and labelling (Barbara Boxer, Democrat from California) have been introduced in the US Senate. For further information on the grassroots lobbying campaign to get these bills passed in Congress see www.thecampaign.org.

More than two dozen bills related to gene-foods have been filed in US state legislatures over the past years in

at least 13 states dealing with issues such as the "Terminator" seed technology, registration of farmers, planting GE crops, and labelling gene-altered foods. Although these bills have been held up in committee or rejected in the face of concerted lobbying by powerful biotech and agribusiness special interests, their proliferation is evidence that more and more politicians are feeling the heat from constituents on GE foods.

SWISS PANEL SLAMS EPA

A prestigious panel of Swiss scientists, commissioned by Greenpeace, on April 19 issued a peer-reviewed critique of the shoddy science endorsed by the EPA to certify the environmental safety of Bt corn. The EcoStrat report reveals that tests submitted by the biotech companies Novartis and Mycogen to determine whether their GE corn could harm non-target insects were so poorly designed that **there was virtually no chance that adverse effects would be observed.** Despite the flawed methodology, EPA accepted the tests as scientific evidence that the gene-altered crop was harmless to non-target insects, and continued to accept the same flawed testing procedures for approval of other companies' insect-resistant "Bt" crops. According to Dr. Doreen Stabinsky, a science advisor to Greenpeace, "We now know that EPA's approval of insect-resistant crops was based on false assumptions, shoddy methodology, and skewed results." For more information on the EcoStrat report see www.greenpeaceusa.org.

INVESTORS REBEL AGAINST GENE-FOODS

Anti-GE shareholder activism in the US has increased considerably since the first of the year. According to the New York Times "Twenty-one resolutions calling for restraints on the use of GM ingredients are on the annual meeting agendas at some of America's leading food and seed manufacturers this year, up from zero a year ago. Shareholders at Coca Cola, Kellogg's, Phillip Morris, and PepsiCo have already voted on the resolutions, which garnered a respective 8.3 percent, 5.6 percent, 4 percent and 3.2 percent of the support of voting shares." As activists point out, once a company faces opposition from 10-15% of its shareholders on an unpopular position such as using GE ingredients in its products, it will usually change its company policy.

PHARMAGEDDON STRIKES BACK: DISINFORMATION, TV ADS, REGULATORY REFORMS

Fearful that the global backlash against gene-foods is spreading to the U.S., Monsanto, Aventis, Novartis, Dow, BASF, Zeneca, DuPont, and the Biotechnology Industry Organization have launched a \$50 million a year public relations campaign to confuse and mislead the American public.

Fronting for the Gene Giants, the Council for Biotechnology Information has paid for promo national television ads, a Web site, www.whybiotech.com, a consumer information hotline, carried out focus groups and polls, and enlisted prominent scientists and public figures. The Council says it may spend as much as \$250 million over the next 5 years. In the CBI's opening national TV ad, the narrator tries to equate the potential benefits of GE crops with the more widely accepted uses of biotechnology in medicine.

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (NAS) APRIL 5

Has released their long-awaited report on genetically engineered crops. While the scientific talking tried to reassure the public that GE foods were safe, national TV networks broadcast a different image: outside the NAS headquarters, a crowd of protesters dressed in white lab coats, holding up and giant dollar bills, chanting anti-GE slogans. While the biotech industry applauded the conclusions of the study, nearly every media organization in the country reported that the NAS report was plagued by charges of conflict of interest. The majority of the scientists on the NAS panel receive money from biotech corporations or labs under contract to the industry, while the original head of the panel, Michael Phillips, left the NAS to work as a PR flack for the Biotechnology Industry Organization. The media also broadcast the criticisms of consumer and public interest groups, that the 261-page NAS report paid little attention to the potential health hazards of GE foods. As Rachel's Environment & Health weekly (May 11) (www.rachel.org) points out, however, a close reading of the NAS report is actually quite damning for the biotech industry and the nation's regulatory agencies (the FDA, the EPA, and the USDA). Among other things the NAS report admits that:

- New allergens & toxins may be introduced into foods.
- Existing toxins in foods may reach new levels, or may be moved into edible portions of plants.
- New allergens may be introduced into pollen, then spread into the environment.
- Previously unknown protein combinations now being produced in plants might have unforeseen effects when new genes are introduced into the plants.
- Nutritional content of a plant may be diminished.

Instead of a whitewash on the safety of GE foods, the NAS report has turned into yet another public relations debacle for the biotech industry.

In a similar vein, the Food and Drug Administration's long-anticipated announcement of "regulatory reforms" on GE foods and crops May 3, was met with indifference by the general public.

Headlines across the country emphasized that the FDA was refusing to label GE foods, while reporters noted that every consumer and environmental group in the US was denouncing the FDA. The FDA is calling for nothing more than

- (1) voluntary industry labelling;
- (2) non-specific industry-FDA "consultations" before new Frankenfoods and crops are put on the market,
- (3) non-specific disclosure of research data by biotech corporations on the internet.

Of course this is not the end of the debate. Battered by mounting public criticism and serious market share loss in Europe and Asia, now spreading to North America, we can expect Monsanto and the Gene Giants to fight back with all they have. (www.purefood.org).

Thanks to BioDemocracy News.

Scientist Dr Prakash is being brought out to NZ by The Lifes Sciences Network to counteract the ANTI GE campaign. He will be meeting ministers in Wellington on 10 July. We do not yet know the venue (for demonstration details ring 04 475 9640).

He will also be speaking at the **Sheraton Hotel Auckland**. There will be a PUBLIC VIGIL outside the hotel.

PUBLIC VIGIL

"Label or BAN GE FOOD"

Sheraton Hotel, Symonds St. Auckland

11th and 12th July, mornings 8-10 am.

Come along or just drive by on the way to work and honk your support.

Dr. Robert Ivker, past president of the American Holistic Medical Association will present a series of seminars and workshops on allergy, sinusitis and asthma in Christchurch, Wellington, Rotorua, Hamilton and Auckland.

For details please contact Price Brown on 09-427 4149

WEB SITE: www.gefree.org.nz

On our website you will find a news section, that always has the **latest news** and over 300 articles from a wide range of sources. There is a ge-free food database, all the newsletters, a merchandise page where you can buy GE-Free T-shirts, bumper stickers, and various publications including the infamous 'Monsanto Files' issue of the Ecologist.

Other Web Sites

<http://www.gatewaybooks.com/alt/genetics/genetics.html>

<http://www.purefoods.org>

<http://www.bio-integrity.org>

<http://www.resistanceisvertile.com>

<http://www.iea.org.uk/wpapers/northgmo2.htm>

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/>

<http://www.whybiotech.com> - Biotech's big boys promo

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/earth/virtual/resources.shtml>

<http://www.foxbghsuit.com>

Helpful books:

Genetic Engineering, Food and Our Environment,

Luke Anderson

Scribe publication \$24.95 Isbn No: 0-908011-43-

1.Distribution-Addenda Ph 09-836-2999 Fax 09-836-2399

Email ED.Nz @xtra .co.nz

GENETIC ENGINEERING Dream or Nightmare?

The Brave New World of Bad Science and Big Business by Dr Mae-Wan Ho

MAORI, Gene's & Genetics, (30 pages) resource, by Cheryl Smith and Paul Reynolds, \$4 available: Whanganui Iwi Law Centre, PO Box 817, Whanganui.

GE FREE NZ IN FOOD & ENVIRONMENT (RAGE) INC

Earlier this year RAGE set as its main objectives the promotion of **GE Free communities / zones** (see enclosed info sheet) and a focus on labelling accompanied by boycotts. It was also agreed to change the name to help promote a positive image. We would like to welcome all new members and hope to enlist your assistance **to set up local groups**. These can be very effective in raising awareness and taking the issue before local councils. If you are interested in setting up a local group please contact us. We can provide master copies of leaflets, as well as stickers and T-shirts which can be bought at cost price and sold on at retail prices to raise funds for photocopying, etc.

Enclosed you find a **membership form** for signing up new members, and a **petition form**. Please gather as many signatures as possible and return to us at P.O. Box 693, Nelson. If you need extra copies please photocopy the original forms. Also enclosed is an **AMP submission guide** to the Royal Commission. We hope it's helpful.

SUBSCRIPTION

GE-Free NZ members receive GE Free Newsletters, submission info, and event updates. Please request a subscription form to join or subscribe online. Members are asked for a donation of \$25 (single) or \$35 (family) per year. Online subscription on website: www.gefree.org.nz Or E-Mail : gefree@ts.co.nz

Please send us your E-Mail address.

This allows us to
1. send you this quarterly newsletters by email
2. notify you by email about actions in your area..

GE FREE FOOD LISTS ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST for a donation to the GE FREE PROJECT (Trudy Burgess) PO BOX 693, NELSON

Special Thanks

GE Free NZ would like to thank Trudy Burgess for her great work she has contributed. (Newsletters, Food DB etc). Due to changes in circumstances she is no longer able to continue working with GE Free NZ. But will endeavour to find sponsorship to continue with the food list.

GE FREE New Zealand in Food & Environment (RAGE Inc.) invites to their **A.G.M** on Sunday 27th of August, 10 am at the Band Rotunda, Oriental Bay, Wellington. For more info please watch our website or e-mail : gefree@ts.co.nz Minister Marion Hobbs has been invited.

GE FREE NEW ZEALAND meets in the following areas:

Kapiti and Wellington every 3 weeks,

Nelson every second Tuesday of each month – contact local coordinator for details.

Auckland every second Wednesday at Friends of the Earth, Australia House, Gore Street, downtown Auckland, (by bus depot). Future meetings July 12th, 26th, etc. Auckland group also need people to operate info stands or organise public meetings.

Please contact Dianna on 09 378 8945 or Kim, Nathan or Steve at 09 376 3107

Auckland group are looking for people to help educate, coordinate & host public gatherings for preparation of submissions to the RCI. Workshops will be held to train people who would like to facilitate this very important task.

All groups need help in this important task, please contact your local group if you can help. Thanks

LOCAL CONTACTS:

Wellington - Claire Southward - 04 475 9640

Kapiti - Ian Melrose - 04 292 7042

Auckland - Dianna Tawharu - 09 378 8945

Northland - Martin Robinson - 09 407 8650

Christchurch – Duncan Sloss 03 337 9764 'Groundswell'

Hastings - Marion Thompson - 06 875 1219

Hamilton – Blair Cameron - 07 839 4314

Palmerston North -Tony Martin - 06 355 9055

Dunedin - Jane Cunningham - 03 482 2006

Invercargill - Margaret Johnston - 03 215 7189

Tauranga - Janice Anne Priest - 07 577 6085

Nelson – Susie Lees – 03 548 6606 / 03 546 7966

June Newsletter was compiled and edited by Susie, Trudy, Silvia and others
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