

GE Free New Zealand Newsletter

Issue No 4 March 2000

order to identify the effects on sheep muscularity." No medical or agricultural benefits have yet been proven.

Trudy L Burgess



**GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOOD
NOW AVAILABLE IN EVERY SUPERMARKET
IN NEW ZEALAND**

UNLABELLED, UNTESTED AND UNSAFE!

**BIOTECH COMPANIES ARE COMING TO NEW
ZEALAND WHERE THE LAND IS CHEAP AND THE
REGULATIONS LAX. WE ARE THEIR SEED-BED
FOR OFF SEASON FIELD TRIALS.**

Let us reject the bad science that has served to exploit, to oppress, to obfuscate, and to destroy the earth and its inhabitants. Let us opt for a joyful and sustainable future beyond genetic engineering.
Ma Won Ho

ERMA HEARING 6 & 7 APRIL 2000

20 Custom House Quay WELLINGTON

Protest and candle light vigil outside on the 6-4-00

ERMA has not turned down a single application to field trial genetically engineered organisms to date. **PROTESTS** To be held outside the building for the duration of the hearing to bring attention and public awareness to the issue of ERMA not protecting the best interests of the NZ people it represents and is funded by. **VENUE** - 20 CustomHouse Quay, Wellington - 9 am at the ERMA NZ hearing room, Level 1 BP House,. If the capacity for this room is exceeded, the venue may be moved to the BP Theatre, also in BP House.

APPLICATION # GMF 99004 Agreseach is "To field test in containment in the Waikato Region, genetically modified sheep with an inactivated myostatin gene, to increase the understanding of myostatin function in

EU POISED TO BAN ROUNDUP

Europe is considering banning the herbicide Roundup because of a recent scientific report showing that the chemical (technically called glyphosate) kills beneficial insects. A ban would not only hurt Roundup sales, but would also affect the biotech crops genetically engineered to withstand the chemical. Independent research in Sweden has linked exposure to glyphosate with non Hodgkin's lymphoma, a form of cancer.

Canada's renowned geneticist and CBC host, Dr. David Suzuki, calls for a moratorium on genetically altered foods. He said Canadians have become unwitting guinea pigs in an experiment on our food supply. Dr. Suzuki stated that anyone who says these foods have been proven safe is mistaken because it would take decades of research to determine the safety of genetically engineered foods, which have only been around for a few years.

Richard Wolfson, PhD Biotech News

TERMINATOR 2 YEARS LATER: SUICIDE SEEDS ON THE FAST TRACK

"We've continued right on with work on the Technology Protection System [Terminator]. We never really slowed down. We're on target, moving ahead to commercialise it. We never really backed off." - Harry Collins, Delta & Pine Land Seed Co., January, 2000

MONSANTO "BULLISH" ON FUTURE OF GM CROPS

ORLANDO, Fla., March 7 (Reuters) Monsanto Co. will forge ahead with bringing its next wave of genetically modified crop seed to market despite the uproar in Europe and Asia over transgenic crops. Monsanto's vice-president for North American agriculture business said "We see the technology as very beneficial for the long term." said Carl Casale in an interview at a commodity conference there. "We are going to work through the issues. We are very, very bullish."

by K.T. Arasu

THE CURRENT SITUATION HERE

Nothing has changed. We are still eating unlabelled genetically engineered food. The Royal Commission of Inquiry is still having the terms of reference written. At present we are not going to get a moratorium on field trials for the duration of the commission. This is of grave concern, as farm scale sized 'field trials' march across the UK, New Zealand seems set to follow.

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**1 to 10 April Resistance is Fertile
International Week Of Action Against GE
Visit www.RESISTANCEisFERTILE.com for details
Nelson - April Fools March 1.4.00
Meet 11 am opposite Chez Eelco**

GE ROYAL COMMISSION – MORATORIUM OR NOT?

At yesterday's organics/GE special interest group, there was concern over the government not allowing a moratorium on new field trials as part of the Royal Commission. It was suggested that as many people as possible write/call/email Helen Clark to urge her to act to stop all new trials in the open environment which will risk irreversible contamination.

The issue of food versus medical research is not the key concern (though important), it is the matter of safe containment or unsafe external trials. There is no way to prevent insects from biting transgenic animals, or eating transgenic trees, however carefully kept behind a fence or terminated before releasing pollen.

The complex interrelationships of life makes any outdoor trial an unacceptable risk to our future (which the Royal Commission is supposed to guide). Please urge people to call for a full moratorium on all new external field trials irrespective of the medical or agricultural focus.

Helen.Clark@parliament.govt.nz

Freepost, Parliament Buildings, Wellington

Phone 04 473 3579 Tel 04 471 9089

PETITION FOR ROYAL COMMISSION INTO GE IN NZ

92, 000 people signed a petition last year asking for a Moratorium on field trials of transgenic crops, animals or other organisms, and on the approval of any further transgenic foods for sale in New Zealand.

It was also requested of the House of Representatives that the Royal Commission hold public hearings in the main centres of NZ with cross examination of evidence.

This petition was ignored when it was presented to parliament. Every single person who signed this petition needs to express their concern to their local MP's and to the Prime Minister.

TRIAL CROPS IN THE UK

The Times (London) March 18, 2000 Home news Michael Meacher backs yet more GM sites. The Government was set on a new collision course with anti-GM protesters last night after giving approval for farmscale crop trials on 31 sites in England and Scotland.

GREENPEACE

PRODUCT BOYCOTTS IN NEW ZEALAND

There is a renewed call by customers for MILO to be made GE-Free. This kiwi icon is a family favourite and should be guaranteed not to have GE ingredients. People need to call the consumer hotline and ask when this will be? In the UK and Hong Kong the manufacturer

has agreed to go GE-free but only when it has "heard " from customers. The period of action is also expected to see people turn the product upside down in stores across the country to remind people to call and demand action. Phone 0800 – 830 840 and ask that Nestle NZ goes GE free here as well.

LABELING GE FOODS OVERSEAS

The US and Canada, came under fire at a global summit on GE foods yesterday; over the thorny issue of whether consumers should be told they're consuming GM products.

Lisa Katic said, "Mandatory labelling could lead consumers to believe there are dangers (associated with GM foods)."

Katic was further cited as saying mandatory labels might force U.S. and Canadian retailers to purge GM foods from stores, where as much as 60 % of products contain genetically modified ingredients, mostly soybeans, corn and canola oil.

She said the growing niche market in organic foods would always leave consumers with a range of choice!

Ase Fulke, head of the Norwegian Food Control Authority, was quoted as saying, "If your customers don't know about it, you've effectively taken away their right to choose. Labelling must be mandatory."

Dr. Suman Sahai, a scientist from India said, "It's presumptuous and arrogant that someone else should decide on behalf of consumers." Sahai was also quoted, "I would like to know what Canada stands for. On one hand, you're supposed to lead an effort to establish labelling, on the other hand, you're working with the United States to sabotage it."

Mitch Potter, Toronto Star European Bureau

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CANOLA FOUND IN AUSTRALIA DUMP SYDNEY, March 25 (Reuters)

Genetically engineered canola plants not yet approved for public release in Australia, have been found in a garbage dump; the Age newspaper reported on Saturday. The Melbourne paper said the experimental plants, contain multiple genetic modifications - including one for antibiotic resistance.

BIOTECH COSMETICS

The European Commission is currently investigating biotech ingredients in cosmetics. Soya and corn, which can be genetically engineered, are used in a huge number of beauty products, including moisturisers, powder compacts, eye shadow, anti-aging creams and lipsticks. Antibiotic resistance genes, which are routinely included in many genetically engineered crops, are a major concern because of the fear they may be taken up by disease organisms and add to the growing number of antibiotic resistant diseases.

GENE SMUGGLING

Dr Mae-Wan Ho, a molecular geneticist at the Open University in UK, explains that genetic engineering

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bypasses conventional breeding by using artificially constructed parasitic genetic elements as vehicles called "vectors" to smuggle genes into cells. Unlike natural parasitic genetic elements that can only infect a limited range of hosts, the vectors used in genetic engineering are designed to overcome species barriers, and can therefore infect a wide range of species. The full text of Dr. Ho's concerns can be read at <http://www.twinside.org.sg/souths/twn/title/mae-cn.htm>(<http://www.twinside.org.sg/souths/twn/title/mae-cn.htm>)

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approach your council to go GE Free
Info packs available \$10 each from
GE Free Action Pack, PO Box 300-232
Albany Auckland, make cheques payable
to GE Free NZ

GE ORGANS & 5 LITTLE PIGS

March 2000

PPL Therapeutics announces that 5 little pigs have been successfully cloned and the supply of organs for xenotransplants is as good as in the bag. In this country, where land is cheap and regulations lax, (Sunday Times 9.1.2000) up to 10,000 sheep with human genes have already been approved to be bred 'in containment' at Ruakura Research Station. Whilst the cows with human genes are still awaiting approval, could the GE pigs soon be on their way to NZ?

"Some researchers are warning that the transplanting of genetically altered animal organs into humans could result in animal viruses crossing species boundaries, creating deadly new viral epidemics for which there are no cure. With biotech companies anxious to supply genetically modified animal organs to tens of thousands of patients in need of transplants in the coming years, virologists are warning of the unleashing of viral pandemics of 'nightmare' proportions."

Quote Jeremy Rifkin. The Biotech Century.

Is it ethical to approve something 'for the public good' when any repercussions are unknown and unidentifiable?

"Several years ago Robin Weiss, a professor at the Inst of Cancer Research in London, showed that a pig retrovirus is capable of infecting human cells in the laboratory. It is then able to infect a wide range of other cells."

Quote Dr Mae Wan Ho. GE Dream or Nightmare?

"When a pig is simply treated as a bio reactor - to produce a certain kind of chemical or material for the pharmaceutical industry, it can be re-engineered and redesigned without any ethical constraint"

Quote Vandana Shiva. Bio-piracy
Susie Lees

VIT A RICE – IS IT GOOD FOR YOU?

The genetic engineering of Vitamin A rice deepens the genetic reductionism of the Green Revolution. Instead of millions of farmers breeding and growing thousands of crop varieties to adapt to diverse ecosystems and diverse food systems; the Green Revolution reduced agriculture to a few varieties of a few crops. From approx 100 to about 6, (mainly rice, wheat and maize) bred in one centralised research centre (IRRI for rice and CIMMYT for wheat and maize). The Green Revolution led to massive genetic erosion in farmers fields and knowledge, erosion among farming communities, besides leading to large scale environmental pollution due to use of toxic agrichemicals and wasteful use of water. Genetically engineered rice as part of the second Green Revolution is repeating the same mistakes, while adding new hazards in terms of ecological and health risks. Including possible Vitamin A poisoning.

BOVINE GROWTH HORMONE, MILK & MONSANTO

US Fox reporters Steve Wilson and Jane Akre's recently toured NZ with their story about rBGH, and the lengths Monsanto would go to stop them telling their story. For further information visit their website www.foxBGHsuit.com

Ironically a similar story was pulled here 2 years ago, on TV 1. What is it that we are not being told?

"If the people of New Zealand realised that this kind of thing is happening here, they might take a little more interest in the whole genetic engineering issue."- Ed

The campaign to stop the genetically engineered bovine growth hormone (r-BGH) entering into the EU and Canada has been successful. The FDA failed to investigate studies showing that the oral feeding of rBGH led to thyroid cysts and prostate activity in male rats. The Health Canada study found that these results necessitated further study of the human health impacts of rBGH. The study also found that significant animal health problems were associated with rBGH use in dairy cows, including a 50% risk increase of lameness and a 25% risk increase of mastitis (udder infections).

However, the FDA approved rBGH for use in the U.S. in late 1993 without finding that it was safe for use and ignoring studies that indicated these human and animal health risks. In contrast, both Canada and the European Union have found the potential human and animal health problems associated with rBGH is great enough to prohibit rBGH use.

Antibiotic Resistance: Because rBGH use results in elevated mastitis levels, dairy farmers tend to use more antibiotics -- residues of these drugs may end up in milk and dairy products. These residues may cause adverse (i.e. allergic) reactions in a few sensitive individuals and contribute to the growth of antibiotic resistance in bacteria, now an important human health issue.

Laurel Hopwood

BST OR rBGH USE HERE IN NEW ZEALAND

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Neville Merton of the NZ Dairy Board Wellington tells me that the Dairy Board has not changed its stance on BST. They say that they will not use it and have banned the use of it due to consumer concerns. Though he also said that it was not economic to use it, as the price out weighed the financial returns of using it. This was a concern to me, that neither animal welfare or human health risks were being mentioned. The door is still open, for this or a similar product to be introduced into New Zealand, at a later date. The NZ Vet Association on the other hand stated that there was a complete EU ban on importation of any products which were produced using these hormones. They said that it would be extremely unlikely to get registration here in New Zealand.

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FIELD TRIAL CROP DESTROYED IN AUSSIE 8 March 2000

Activists from the Free Seed Liberation Front (FSLF) up-ended and trampled more than 200 genetically engineered pineapples in a field trial near Brisbane (Queensland) last night.

"Our governments should be directing research dollars into moving our society towards sustainable organic food production, rather than developing crops such as these pineapples, which are being developed purely to benefit the food processing and biotechnology industries." a spokesperson for the FSLF said. "Following the Federal Governments' pathetic backpedalling on labelling of genetically engineered foods yesterday, it's obvious they can not be trusted to act in the best interests of the people. It's time for us to take action. This is just the beginning of the people's movement against genetic engineering of our foods. We believe that genetic engineering of food crops will exacerbate the environmental problems caused by industrial agriculture and increase corporate control of the food supply through patenting genetic codes."

**"DIRECT ACTION IS NOT ONLY JUSTIFIED...
IT'S ALSO VERY EFFECTIVE"**

TONY ARE THERE TOAD GENES IN MY SPUDS?

The field trial application to grow GE potatoes near Lincoln '98 stated that the object was to control the serious problem of bacterial soft rot in potatoes. Prior to the ERMA hearing; on contacting the main commercial potato growers in the Auckland region and other areas we were told that bacterial soft rot is not a problem in potato growing because: Resistant varieties of potatoes are already grown, and bacterial soft rot is a management problem. Solved by ensuring healthy soil, growing conditions, and correct storage of the crop. Which really introduces questions of the real motivation and purpose of the decade long field trialling of GE potatoes in NZ by Dr Tony Conners? (Has there been a crop this year, as they had approval for a five year trial?)

Wendy Johnson (FOE)

CHINA - HIGH LEVEL OF MODIFIED FOOD ON SALE

An appeal for speedier labelling of genetically modified food was made by the Consumer Council yesterday. When the council released a survey that found one in five super-market products studied, contained GM ingredients. In a survey of 105 food products, the most commonly modified crops were soya beans, corn and tomatoes, 21 products were found to have GM contents. The nine products with the most genetically altered ingredients had from three to 50 per cent, including three baby formulas. Abbott Laboratory's Isomil Soy Protein Infant Formula had the top reading, 50 %, followed by Campbell's Golden Corn soup and Nissin Demae Ramen Instant Noodle, at 30 % each.

By Alex Lo - South China Morning Post Ltd

<http://www.environmentaldefense.org/pubs/emagazine/2000/naturesway.html>

AUSTRALIA-WIDE PROTESTS SAY 'NO!' TO GE FOODS World Consumer Rights Day - March 15

There were protests in most capital cities and many regional centres today over the presence of unlabelled, untested genetically engineered foods on supermarket shelves. An information leaflet was launched to mark World Consumer Rights Day and to counter government funded disinformation in supermarkets. "Access to information and the right to know what has been done to our food must be guaranteed by labelling," said GeneEthics Director Bob Phelps. "But our Prime Minister has delayed the labelling of processed foods containing imported GE soy, corn, canola, potato and sugarbeet, as well as local cottonseed oil," said Bob. "Health Ministers decided last year to label all foods produced using gene technology, but that may now be reversed and July 2001 is the earliest we may see labels," he said. "Howard has done the dirty on Australian food buyers, siding with US companies that claim to benefit US farmers but impose health and environmental hazards on us," he said. "On World Consumer Rights Day we demand our right to know what we are eating," he said. "With government support for the organic industry instead of GE, Australia could meet the huge demand for clean, green organic foods," he concluded. How does this impact upon us? By giving our decisions on labelling to ANZFA, has NZ lost its right to choose.

Clean and Green sounds familiar -will NZ Miss the Boat?

GE-FREE ZONE FOR CHRISTCHURCH

April 13th, the Environment Committee of the Chch City Council is holding a seminar on the GE issue. They aim to become more informed about GE. They can then consider what declaring a GE-Free Zone would mean for Christchurch. Afterwards, the Committee will decide whether to recommend that Groundswell's GE-Free Zone proposal proceed to full council. Dr Morgan

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Williams, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Janice Wright from IBAC and Sue Kedgley from the Safe Food Campaign will address the seminar. In Nov 99 many committee members expressed concern about GE, and a desire to know more about the issue, reacting positively to the vision of a GE-Free Christchurch as outlined in the proposal.
Contact 03 389 2938 Paul de Spa

GREENPEACE ATTACKS FRANKENFLAKES

The Detroit News March 24, 2000

Greenpeace protests Kellogg. Demonstrators scale museum wall, call for end to genetically modified ingredients. Five Greenpeace demonstrators were arrested Thursday for scaling the walls of a Kellogg Co. museum and unfurling banners...

HERBICIDE RESISTANT "FRANKENWEEDS" EMERGE IN CANADIAN CANOLA FIELDS

February 10, 2000
The story says that volunteer canola resistant to three herbicide-tolerant canola systems has been found in a field in northern Alberta. Phil Thomas said, "We knew it was going to happen. It was only a matter of when." A series of chemical and DNA tests confirm the weeds in Tony Huether's field near Sexsmith are resistant to Roundup, Liberty and Pursuit chemicals. Canola scientist Keith Downey, who created modern canola, says the triple-resistant canola isn't a great problem, adding, "We haven't created a superweed or anything like that." He said that adding 2,4-D or a similar herbicide to a chemical mix will kill any wayward weeds, noting, "I don't think it means anything to consumers." [Web note: 2,4-D is a toxic herbicide]

Jenny Hillard, vice-president of the Consumer Assoc. adding, "The backlash now is so little based on fact, I know it won't make it any worse. The general public hasn't a clue of what's going on. They're frightened with so little science behind their fears. They need to get a handle on this or we'll lose the whole damn technology." "I feel that the results should be made public." Huether points his finger at the close relationship between chemical companies and government scientists, stating, "It's hush hush because research is funded to a large extent by big business. I'm losing more and more confidence in the whole system of research and how things are approved."
<http://www.producer.com/articles/20000210/news/20000210news01.html>
By Beach von Oesen or Stacia Tipton

WEB SITES TO VISIT

www.ge-free.co.nz
www.purefoods.org
www.bio-integrity.org
www.oneworld.org for kids
PSRG www.psrp.org.nz
www.greenpeace.org
Richard North <http://www.iea.org.uk/wpapers/northgmo2.htm>
Revised USDA Organic Proposal
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/>
www.safe-food.org

BOOKS

Luke Andersons book

Genetic Engineering, Food and Our Environment
Scribe publication \$24.95 Isbn No: 0-908011-43-1
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GENETIC ENGINEERING Dream or Nightmare?

The Brave New World of Bad Science and Big Business
by Dr Mae-Wan Ho
<http://www.gatewaybooks.com/alt-h/genetics/genetics.html>

**ORGANIC GARDENING IS GAINING GROUND
Chemical pesticides are on the decline as more of America's backyard botanists choose natural products. From mulching mowers to eco-safe bug traps, you can find ways to make your garden fully green. (From the editors of E Magazine.)**

BIODEMOCRACY AND ORGANIC CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION

March 21, 2000
Washington, March 21-An unprecedented coalition of more than 50 consumer, environmental, scientific, farm and health groups filed a legal petition with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today demanding the establishment of stringent pre-market safety testing regulations for genetically engineered foods (GE foods). Under the current FDA "non-labelling" policy, those suffering from food allergies have no way of knowing they are consuming GE foods or how to avoid this potential new source of food allergy. Health professionals are also concerned that the mass consumption of GE foods, most of which contain genetic material resistant to antibiotics, could eventually make treating infections more difficult.
"The FDA has ignored the law and placed the interest of a handful of biotechnology companies ahead of their responsibility to protect public health," stated Andrew Kimbrell. "By failing to require pre-market testing and labelling of genetically engineered foods, the agency has made consumers unknowing guinea pigs for potentially harmful, unregulated food substances."
Web Page : <http://www.NaturalLaw.org.nz/genetic>

BOSTON CITY COUNCIL GE FREE DECLARATION

Resolution Of Councillor Maura Hennigan
The following resolution was passed unanimously by the Boston City Council on March 2, 2000
WHEREAS: A class action lawsuit has been brought against the Food and Drug Administration by some of the nation's most prominent anti-trust lawyers for rushing these novel, unpredictable and untested food technology products to the market; and therefore be it
RESOLVED: That the Boston City Council, in meeting assembled, urges the Federal Government to require labelling of genetically manipulated foods and further urges a moratorium on the production of any more of these foods until acceptable testing systems are in place; and Be It Further Resolved: **That March 26, 2000**

be declared **YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT DAY** in the
City of Boston.

SEED SAVING

Saving seed of non-hybrid (open pollinated) food is of paramount importance, for those interested in seed saving all are welcome to attend the seed saving forum 16-18 June at Golden Bay Community Organic Gardens. Contact Sol Morgan 03 545 6020 email solmadara@yahoo.com

As a species, we wish to continue to grow the food we chose year after year. There are only about 30 commercial varieties of vegetable that are available in the supermarkets. Not only is saving seed highly rewarding , it is easy, fun, enhances community cooperation and enables us to grow a much wider range of food. So if you are keen gardener or just starting out then contact a seed exchange or organic seed company near you. Sol Morgan

www.soil-health.org.nz

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The Genetic Child

Now I'm grown up, what do I say,
When asked about a parents day.
Who are they?
Of my genes I have no say.
My mother, she was never born.
My father came in a donor form.
I have as such no family history,
No status, I'm just a mystery.
Took an egg from a scrap of tissue,
Ignoring God's law on the human issue.
To this they added odd spare sperm.
Borrowed a womb till I came to term.
Nine months later I arrived.
Scientists made sure I survived.
"A miracle" I hear you cry.
No one seems to question "Why?"
People ask me why I'm sad.
Who do I call my mum or dad?
I find life bare and solitary.
The product of a laboratory.

Members please send us your email address, so we can send the next newsletter via email.

Send to GEFREE@ts.co.nz

Thanks

HEALTHY OPTIONS MAGAZINE

April issue includes a sample of and promotion for the GE Free food list, and supporting articles by Stephen Benner & Ron Law about the dangers of GE foods.

Compiled and edited by Trudy L Burgess

Co edited by Susie Lees

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Changing its name to **GE FREE NZ (RAGE) Inc**

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