



# GE Free New Zealand

## In Food and Environment

### Newsletter

### Spring 2004

\* Please note that some articles have been abbreviated in order to meet size constraints \*

#### Presidents Report:

Dear Members

Our AGM said goodbye to Susie Lees, thank you for all your untiring work, we will miss you. Four years of compiling this great newsletter has earned her a break!

Thanks to Kara for taking over as our Newsletter editor.

There has been much happening – the GE Free Bus (PMEA) travelled the country educating the public – well done there. The Cartagena protocol was signed by Government. Thanks to everyone who wrote in and added to the debate.

The Greens raised the issue of MON 863 with food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). Our consumer representative of GE Free wrote to New Zealand Food safety authority (NZFSA) asking for withdrawal of the MON 863 corn from our NZ food chain.

I received documents from the expert panel on GE in France, that stated the corn produced significant changes in the white blood cells, raised leucocytes and inflamed the kidneys of male rats and raised the blood glucose levels in females. The GE corn was fed for 90 days at 11% and 33% of the diet. The introduction of small amounts in our diet of a mixture of GE ingredients over long periods is of concern, it may take up to five years to show up in humans who eat a high diet of processed foods.(see press releases [www.gefree.co.nz](http://www.gefree.co.nz))

On 11<sup>th</sup> Oct we hope to have a date for the PPL court case. The case has been taken on the grounds that the land was not properly monitored for GE elements after the trial stopped. The property was sold and animals presently grazing there are being moved around the country with no monitoring. If an unusual disease is

found in the area we need to be able to see if there is any link to GE HGT. MAF recognise the best control for TB is movement control - this is now needed for animals on this farm.

I am asking that long term testing of the PPL facility is carried out. This is important because new diseases are appearing in the world that have crossed the species barrier, these can take some time to show often over 5 years. As yet there is absolutely no data on the survival of GE material in animal effluent and blood products and to see if any horizontal gene transfer into soil organisms occurs.

MAF has kept seed tolerance levels at "Zero". Pacific seeds is now using new techniques to ensure purity.

Dick Hubbard has now stated publicly that there is no GE in his cereals, as new Auckland mayor we hope he will support the GE Free issue. Many councils north of Auckland have demonstrated co-operation and information sharing over the GE debate, recently commissioning a new report. The Sommerville report previously commissioned by Northland councils has allowed councils and communities to work on keeping GE out of their environments. Well done Queenstown for their work on sustainability without GE. Congratulations for all communities who got the issue of GE into their long term plans.

It looks as if we can have another year possibly without any GE mistakes this time round.

Keep up the good work  
Claire Bleakley

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#### All NOT Quiet on the GE Front

Jon Carapiet

I have recently heard comments that things have 'gone quiet' on the GE issue, but though it may seem that

way, the reality is very different. The challenge for us all is to ensure the 70% of New Zealanders who care about protecting our GE-free environment are kept informed and given the tools to enable them to take small but effective actions.

I want to highlight here just a few of the recent and upcoming events that can inspire us all. The TransTasman campaign to stop Inghams using GE feed continues with the early October day of Action and the need to inform others that Inghams chickens are 'going cheap' for a very good (or rather- bad) reason. (see article below).

It is also worth complaining to the Commerce Commission that they should investigate misleading responses by Inghams to consumer queries. Despite scientific evidence to the contrary, Inghams claim GE feed has no effect on chickens and that they are therefore GE-free!!

The Commerce Commission has also been busy trying to tell manufacturers NOT to label GE FREE food. Though on the surface it seems reasonable to require 100% GE Free status, the Commission is not applying a level playing field, because the use of hidden GE ingredients does not require labelling.

The Commerce Commission needs to be pressured to lobby to have this legislative loophole closed and for the introduction of *full* GE labelling. At the same time it is clear that they should be allowing companies to claim a GE-Free *Policy* and then audit them to ensure this is true. If the company is not doing everything they can to be GE-free (which is still largely achievable whatever the product) they should be prosecuted.

The good news is that despite recent contamination scares with maize, our crops, fruit and vegetables are still GE

free. Recently innovations for seed testing backed by Pacific Seeds can now ensure our Zero Tolerance for GE contamination in seed can be maintained year upon year. [www.sustainabilitynz.org](http://www.sustainabilitynz.org)

This is in contrast to MAF's push to allow GE contamination as inevitable. Companies that refuse to use the improved testing protocols should be held liable for negligence and prosecuted for sabotaging of our economic well-being.

Unfortunately it appears some organisations are still failing to live up to the biosecurity standards the public are demanding. Crop & Food were recently shown to have mishandled a GE potato trial by failing to maintain a "buffer crop" within the confines of the site. It did not result in any GE-escape but it did reveal they are sloppy and must be held to account.

More serious has been the GE Maize from Monsanto - MON 863- - approved by our food standards authority but rejected in European countries due to harmful results in animal trials. Monsanto kept the trial results hidden from Australia/NZ regulators as they were "not significant", and our authorities have done nothing to recall or track the corn. It is time to write to Annette King - "Minister of Health" - demanding a recall system at least be designed and put in place to cope with this or future incidents where a GE food is found to be harmful. The fact that there is no recall system already is a scandal.

Though the government deserves some credit for heeding the majority of public submissions and ratifying the Cartagena protocol to regulate movement of GMO's around the world, they maintain their policy to allow GE release here when all the evidence shows it is against the national interest. Though unlikely, it would be good to see the Green Party bill to restore the GE moratorium get backing from other parties like NZ First, Progressives and United as well as any Labour MP's who have the national interest at heart. We do not want to see ordinary people having to decontaminate sites of GE crops as has happened in Europe and elsewhere. Though campaigners like France's Jose

Bove have even been backed by juries for acting in the public interest, it is the duty of government to protect the GE-free status of our food and environment, notwithstanding the general public acceptance of *ethical* research and use of gene technology in *full containment*.

Sadly the report from the Bioethics Council on the use of human genes in other organisms shows government agencies are pushing an agenda that deliberately ignores public concern, and the Council is likely to be as little genuine benefit to our country's best interests as the Royal Commission was.

The recent national tour of the PMEA (People's Moratorium Enforcement Agency) has been an important source of education for the public and a reminder that the public remain watchful of ERMA and the biotech industry's plans for New Zealand. We cannot allow food to be contaminated by pharmaceutical-crops as has already happened in incidents in the US. With new Councilors and Mayors now elected, it is time to urge them to they follow the lead of the coalition of Northern Councils, and others, who are taking legal advice on preventing GE release in their region. They at least are listening to the democratic will of their people, and looking for ways to prevent ratepayer exposure to costs and to hold those promoting GE fully liable. Pick up the phone or write to them now and make sure that every region of Aotearoa New Zealand is protected as a GE free Zone.

Press releases - [www.gefree.org.nz](http://www.gefree.org.nz)

### GE-Free Food Labelling

The Commerce Commission recently released a discussion paper on the voluntary labelling of foods as being free of GE material, intended to assist the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission develop guidelines to help manufacturers "more easily and accurately label food exported between the two countries". However it will not assist consumers wishing to purchase GE-free food.

The paper is called: Discussion Paper on Proposed Draft Guidelines on the Labelling of Genetically Modified Foods and Food Products September 2004. The seven page paper is

available on the Commerce Commission's website:

[www.comcom.govt.nz](http://www.comcom.govt.nz)

Submissions closed October 11, 2004.

**The proposal:** The Commerce Commission states that food cannot be labelled as GM-free if there is any GM contamination at all, regardless of whether it is accidental and the manufacture took every means possible to avoid it. If any contamination is found in a GM-free labelled food, a food producer would be prosecuted by the Commerce Commission.

**Key Issues:** On the face of it, the Commerce Commission's stance is supportive of consumers, ensuring that no one will buy a product purporting to be GM-Free when it in fact it contains GM contamination. However, in reality it means that food producers will shy away from a GM-free label (because they could face strong penalties from the Commerce Commission) whereas food producers who sell unlabelled food with GM ingredients in it will not face prosecution. This is unfair, it will mean that consumers will not be able to distinguish between most GM foods and GM-free foods.

**Background:** Under the Commerce Commission proposal, because of the pervasiveness of GM contamination in some food ingredients (notably soy) even companies that voluntarily go the extra mile to keep GM ingredients out of their products by using Identity Preservation Systems and testing imported ingredients with Genetic ID testing will face legal action if inadvertent contamination occurs. This threat is likely to stop them using to GM-free labelling altogether. Yet other companies that knowingly use GM ingredients will continue to get away with not declaring on a label that the food contains GM ingredients because of FSANZ's very lax and woefully inadequate GM labelling standards which only require foods to be labelled as containing GM if they contain "detectable GM DNA or protein", or inadvertent GM contamination above a 1% threshold. This means that foods derived from GM but which are so highly processed they no longer contain GM DNA or protein, or foods that do contain it 'accidentally' (and this covers most

GM foods on our market) do not have to be labelled. This means that the consumer wanting GM-free food and the manufacturer who wants to provide it are unfairly penalised, as the effect of these two different approaches to labelling by the two organisations is to favour producers who continue to use GE ingredients in foods. Furthermore, the current FSANZ GM labelling standard is in contravention of the Fair Trading Act because it allows GM ingredients to remain, undeclared, in food. As a result most consumers are misled into thinking there are no GM ingredients in the unlabelled food they buy, when this is not the case.

**Solution:** There must be consistency in the application of our labelling laws, and a level playing field for producers and consumers, instead of the proposed one which is tilted in favour of GM. The GM labelling standards and the GM-free labelling standard must be administered by the same body. The FSANZ Food Standard should be changed to require labelling of all foods and foods containing ingredients derived from GM processes regardless of whether or not the food or ingredient was inadvertently sourced from a GM process. This way, when a food appears on the market without a GM label on it consumers will know that it truly does not contain any GM material or derive from a GM process. This is the only way in which consumers wishing to buy GM-free food will not be misled, a requirement of the Fair Trading Act.

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**Simon Terry: New rules help to keep food pure NZ Herald 29.9.04**

As many premium markets firm up on their unwillingness to accept even a trace of genetically modified content in food, New Zealand's ability to meet this demand has quietly taken two important steps forward.

There is both a new means to screen out GM contamination in seed imports and new international rules which the Government has decided to adopt that will assist with such GM-related risks.

Because New Zealand has no commercial production of GM food, the biggest risk of contamination entering the food production chain is through imported seeds.

Just two years ago a GM plant researcher from the Crop and Food Institute argued that New Zealand would probably need to stop importing seed if it wanted to maintain zero tolerance to GM contamination.

The alternative advanced by promoters of GM agriculture was so-called tolerance limits. These would allow seed consignments to pass Ministry of Agriculture border inspections if they were found to be GM-contaminated, but were still below a certain threshold level.

However, the zero tolerance standard was kept in place and all forms of seed have continued to be imported. That the three confirmed incidents of contaminated seed since 2002 have all involved varieties of corn (maize and sweetcorn) is not surprising given that they account for 95 per cent of the area under crops identified by the Ministry of Agriculture as meriting border testing for GM content.

This concentration of risk in corn seed imports is part of what makes an innovation by one of the leading seed companies so significant.

Pacific Seeds has developed new practices that directly check GM contamination in maize by planting American seeds in glasshouses, then leaf-testing each plant to select ones to breed seed from.

In this way the company's Gateway programme weeds out contaminated breeding stock while still supplying a price-competitive product.

This spring growers will have the choice of buying Gateway maize from Pacific Seeds, and the same system can also be used for other crop varieties.

The wider significance of Gateway is that it demonstrates a method that any seed producer can use because there is nothing proprietary about the fundamental insight that Pacific Seeds has made use of.

At the same time, food producers have extended their quality assurance

practices, using bigger sample sizes and testing at more points in the overall food production chain. While the single Ministry of Agriculture border test uses about 3200 seeds, exporters are routinely using 10,000 seeds and sometimes 50,000 to improve detection above the ministry's 95 per cent confidence limit. Why so much effort?

One of the nation's largest food producers has plainly stated to the ministry that "the implications for any GM contamination, real or perceived, anywhere in our supply chain, or even just anywhere in New Zealand, are potentially damaging for all of our business, such is the level of sensitivity of many of our customers to this issue".

Federated Farmers maize growers' spokesman Colin MacKinnon has similarly observed that, "The way our markets are, the majority of our customers require GM-free maize".

Such food producers will be helped in their efforts to check GM contamination by the Government's decision to ratify the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol.

This protocol to the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity establishes a mechanism for prior notification and informed consent before a nation agrees to import living GM organisms.

If seeds or viable GM foods are to be shipped to New Zealand by any of the 107 countries that have so far ratified the protocol, notification will be required.

While New Zealand has significant approval requirements for intended shipment of live GMOs, Cartagena promises two important upgrades.

The first relates to unintended GMO content in shipments. Under Cartagena, the burden of proof is shifted on to the party shipping food or feed to identify if it "may contain" live GMOs. Thus it will not be down to the Ministry of Agriculture alone to anticipate which imports carry this risk.

The second, and linked, benefit is the plan to develop liability provisions under Cartagena. While the design of these provisions is yet to begin, the

intention is that they will provide redress if a shipment containing live GMOs causes damage.

That could reasonably include losses from the undeclared presence of trace GM content in an imported ingredient that leads to rejection of the final product.

This was the circumstance that last year resulted in a Gisborne food producer suffering a \$500,000 loss when 0.05 per cent GM content was detected in a corn product destined for Japan. While those backing New Zealand to eventually grow and export GM foods see such liability provisions as a risk, the smart money is on the nation adopting other means of improving food production that do not rely on GM techniques. Many of these are already far outpacing their GM counterparts in the marketplace and offer innovation consistent with New Zealand's clean, green branding.

Because the Cartagena liability provisions are the subject of long-running international negotiations, the domestic focus will tend to be on further proposals for tolerance limits on seed imports. Thresholds are strongly sought after by GM plant developers because it makes commercial GM cultivation seem less of a hurdle if other food producers already suffer from routine and randomly distributed contamination.

What proponents of GM agriculture must increasingly contend with is that thresholds are not inevitable. There are alternatives available at no or low cost to the economy, ones that can preserve our status in a world increasingly willing to pay for pure food.

\* Simon Terry is the executive director of the Sustainability Council. [www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?thesubsection=&storyID=3595563](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?thesubsection=&storyID=3595563)

### **Government to ratify Cartagena Biosafety Protocol**

**Hon Marian Hobbs 16.9.04**

Public consultation on ratification attracted more than 1200 responses, mostly in favour. "We are ratifying the protocol because New Zealand is a good international citizen and we are committed to comprehensive biosecurity," Marian Hobbs said. New

Zealand will join more than 100 countries that have ratified the protocol which regulates international trade of GE organisms known as living modified organisms (LMOs). "We support people being informed about what's imported and exported. It can be seen as an extension of border biosecurity," Marian Hobbs said. "By working with countries that have ratified we are protecting our future trade. Regulations will be put into place to ensure that New Zealand exporters of LMOs meet identification, reporting and other requirements of the protocol.

"The Protocol came into force on 11 September 2003.

A document summarising responses to public consultation can be found at: [www.mfat.govt.nz/foreign/env/biosafety/submissionsindex.html](http://www.mfat.govt.nz/foreign/env/biosafety/submissionsindex.html)

Biosafety Protocol –Q&A here:

[www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.cfm?DocumentID=20941](http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.cfm?DocumentID=20941)

### **HOW TO LOBBY YOUR COUNCILS IN YOUR REGION**

One very powerful way in which we can systematically build structures to protect our region is via our councils.

Find out if your Council has included GE in their policy, if not, make an appointment to present information at a Council Meeting.

Contact Kara if you would like a copy of a "How to Lobby Your Regional & District Councils Kit" a step by step guide with a Power Point Presentation and relevant recent reports which have been published in the past few years. For more info: A/H: 04 801 7121 [kara@wetafx.co.nz](mailto:kara@wetafx.co.nz)

### **COUNCIL TO SEND 'CLEAR MESSAGE' ON GM FOOD**

**Otago Daily Times**

**Queenstown:** A motion to send a "clear message" that the Queenstown Lakes District council did not want any trials of GE food in the district until a working party had looked into the issue was unanimously passed by councillors.

The council heard earlier from 8 members of a Wanaka-based GE action group, opposing GE trials.

The recommendation from Cr Kathy Neal is to establish a working party to

improve community understanding of the issue and determine if there was any requirement for council action.

Field trials put environment and tourism at risk, and could be a financial burden for ratepayers she said. "No protection has been put in place by central Government if anything goes wrong in field trials in our district. We, as a community, will have to pick up the cost."

Local government throughout NZ had not been given the "privilege" of being able to impose a moratorium in their areas, as in Australia, she said.

### **Councils fund Northland Report September 16, 2004**

Northern territorial councils are united in supporting the Risks and Options Report on Genetic Engineering in the Northland peninsula. Rodney District Council has joined Whangarei, Kaipara, and Far North District Councils and Waitakere City Council in putting \$10,000 each towards the report.

A detailed study of the environmental, economic and cultural risks of releasing GE organisms is expected to be ready by the end of October. It will look at the options for local authorities to manage the risks of GE releases, ranging from doing nothing to a total ban.

Whangarei District Council staff member working on the issue, Kerry Grundy, said GE was a prominent issue identified by community consultation on LTCCP in Northland. "Continued collaboration on a regional basis is the most efficient and effective way to address this highly contentious and complex issue,"

[www.gefreenorthland.org.nz](http://www.gefreenorthland.org.nz)

### **GM CROPS - Where Local Government Picks Up**

Communities and their elected representatives face a new resource management issue: the outdoor production of genetically modified (GM) food varieties: [www.sustainabilitynz.org/docs/CouncilOptionsforGMmanagement.pdf](http://www.sustainabilitynz.org/docs/CouncilOptionsforGMmanagement.pdf)

### **Northland Councils Investigate Local Management of GMOs**

The Exec Sum & full rpt:

[www.sustainabilitynz.org](http://www.sustainabilitynz.org)

## BUYERS GUIDE 16, 9.04

### Chicken and eggs

(Status depends mainly on whether the companies source GE-Free soy for chicken feed. Organic products are by definition GE-Free, even if they're not listed here.)

#### Green zone (GE-Free):

**Heuvels Chicken** (organic) Gisborne  
Contact: 06 868 3291 or  
willowfoods@xtra.co.nz

**Tegel Chicken** (and products)  
Contact: 0800 243 253 or  
andrew.stevens@tegel.co.nz

**Eco Eggs** Levin  
Contact: 06 368 6889  
ecoegg@xtra.co.nz

**Frenz Eggs** Pukekohe

**Henergy Eggs** Masterton  
Contact: 06-378 8385

**Old Fashioned Eggs** Clevedon

#### Orange zone:

on their way to removing GE-derived ingredients

#### **PAM's Chicken**

House brand of Pak N Save, New World, Write Price & Four Square  
<http://www.foodstuffs.co.nz/info/melissa@foodstuffs.co.nz>

#### **Sure as Eggs**

Contact: 0800-787-327  
sbamfield@sureaseggs.co.nz

#### Red zone :

*may contain GE-derived ingredients:*

#### **Inghams Chicken & other products**

Contact: 0800650650 / 0508800785  
[comments@ingham.com.au](mailto:comments@ingham.com.au)  
Email form:  
[www.greenpeace.org.nz/action/ge/ingham.asp](http://www.greenpeace.org.nz/action/ge/ingham.asp)

#### **Best Bird Chicken**

#### **Brinks Chicken**

(sources feed from Inghams)  
Contact: (09) 292 7662

#### **Farm Lay Farm Fresh Eggs**

#### **Farmer Brown Eggs**

#### **Zeagold Eggs**

Owned by Mainland Poultry who supply 40% of eggs in New Zealand.

Contact: 0800 367 344  
[diana@mainlandpoultry.co.nz](mailto:diana@mainlandpoultry.co.nz)

*Please note:* this is not a complete list, for more information, consult the True Food Guide [www.gefreefood.org.nz](http://www.gefreefood.org.nz)

**Check out the Get Inghams website.**  
[www.stop-ingham-georg/](http://www.stop-ingham-georg/)

Or contact PMEA on 0508 GE FREE

#### **Zero tolerance reassessment on backburner 16.9.04**

The zero tolerance policy looks likely to stay in place at least until after the election. Government ministers are backing away from reassessing the policy of allowing no GE contamination of seed. MAF has questioned in the past whether the policy is viable, following two incidents of contamination in imported seed. GE-Free groups & Sustainability Council have spoken in favour of keeping the zero tolerance policy. [tvnz.co.nz/view/news\\_health\\_story\\_ski\\_n/445427%3fformat=html](http://tvnz.co.nz/view/news_health_story_ski_n/445427%3fformat=html)

#### **E-card campaign on GE corn 16, 9.04**

Monsanto did not pass on a key rat feeding study to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) when the corn was approved for human consumption. Companies are required to sign a declaration that they have not withheld any information that might prejudice the application.

The 90-day feeding study found that rats fed the GE corn developed abnormalities, including changes in blood cells and abnormalities in their kidneys. Concerns raised by the study led to a French committee turning down the GE corn as a human food. Their decision was subsequently overturned by the European Food Safety Authority. Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has now asked Monsanto for data from the study and is reinvestigating the safety of MON 863 corn but have refused to carry out a full reassessment.

The Green Party has launched an e-card campaign calling for a full reassessment of MON863 GE corn.

#### **Send an e-card**

[www.greens.org.nz/ge/ecard\\_mon863.asp](http://www.greens.org.nz/ge/ecard_mon863.asp)

#### **Two GE field trial breaches 16.9.04**

Tougher monitoring rules have been set in place around the site of a 2001 GE potato field trial at Lincoln Univ, after a breach of containment rules. Purple (non-GE potatoes part of a buffer crop) were found growing several metres outside the field trial boundary in April 2004. The 1,000 GE plants were harvested by hand, but the potatoes were dragged away from the site using mechanical methods. The site, and a larger area around it, will now be monitored for an extra 12 months.

ERMA inspectors were also critical of a GE flower trial run by the University of Otago. Plastic bags designed to catch pollen and seeds did not fit properly around the flowers, and a system in place to stop GE pollen being carried from the laboratory was not the one set down in the rules for the trial. Researchers do not believe that any GE pollen or seed escaped from the trial. ERMA: "Bulletin 57, p37" [www.ermanz.govt.nz/](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/)

#### **Sunday Star Times: "Test flaws risked GE contamination"**

[www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/sundaystartimes/0,2106,3031608a6442,00.html](http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/sundaystartimes/0,2106,3031608a6442,00.html)

#### **Two new ERMA members' September 2,9.04**

Two new members have been appointed to ERMA (Environmental Risk Management Authority), the Government watchdog which decides whether applications for GE release should go ahead. Dr Kieren Elborough is a chief scientist at Fonterra's biotech arm, Vialactia, with experience in plant gene technology & Helen Atkins is a partner with Phillips Fox law firm, replacing ecologist Dr Lin Roberts, and specialist in medicine and Maori health, Professor Colin Mantell. Environment Minister Marian Hobbs said the appointments would "provide a valuable balance to the existing capabilities of the authority" [www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.cfm?DocumentID=20736](http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.cfm?DocumentID=20736)

#### **Dialogue process limited 2.9.04**

The report on the use of human genes into plants and animals, by the

Bioethics Council, has been criticised as not adequately representing the public's views. Jon Carapiet said the council should be less self-satisfied about their dialogue process, because the report is based on the views of only a few hundred participants with input came from selected focus groups or invited sectors of the community.

Public meetings were poorly attended, and online discussion had only 27 contributors, although it received over 1,800 hits. The council received 130 submissions, despite a high level of interest in public participation, and a willingness by participants to "enter into respectful dialogue".

### **Bioethics report says keep human genes out of food 2.9.04**

The Bioethics Council has backed a recommendation from the Royal Commission that sheep and cows should not be used to produce drugs or human proteins, calling for non-food animals to be used instead. "There is a concern among some that human genes should not enter the food chain," said the report. "While for some the concern is related to risk, there is also a cultural issue, in that it is inappropriate for human genes to be in food. We consider that this opinion should be respected." The council also called for a ban on the creation of GE animals which talk, think like or look like humans. The report gave a cautious thumbs up to putting human genes in plants and animals. Report: [www.bioethics.org.nz](http://www.bioethics.org.nz)

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

### **Biotech \$40 billion down 19.8.04**

Biotech companies in America have lost \$40 billion according to the Wall St Journal, but investors are still buying into high-risk companies doing medical research involving GE, in a volatile market compared to the dot-com bubble. More than one hundred new drugs and vaccines have been developed using biotech, including commonly used products such as GE insulin. Only a few companies, have managed to get into the black. The rest face big losses, due largely to huge research costs. Publicly-traded US biotech companies lost \$3.2 billion in 2003.

[www.geinfo.org.nz/082004/08.html](http://www.geinfo.org.nz/082004/08.html)

### **Thai papayas cancelled 16.9.04**

GE contamination of Thailand's papaya crop has caused a market reaction "faster than the bird-flu impact", according to an organic exporter. European importers quickly cancelled export orders, following suspicions that Government field trials of GE papayas had contaminated the Thailand's export crop. In Hawaii, growers are facing a similar threat, with independent test results showing more than 50 % of organic & backyard papayas are GE contaminated.

Greenpeace last month released test results showing Thai papaya seeds were contaminated with the genetically engineered Kaek Dam Tha Phra strain.

The Thai Government denied for over a month that any contamination had occurred, but a minister finally confirmed it this week. Crops at the Government research centre will be destroyed, and a "protective ring" established to try and control the contamination.

A leading fruit exporter estimated the Thai industry has already lost one billion baht (\$37 million) because of the shutdown of export markets.

Green Party co-leader Jeanette Fitzsimons said the Thai experience was a warning to New Zealand exporters that even the suspicion to GE contamination could be extremely costly.

Non-GM-farmers (source: Bangkok Post): "Thai exporters estimate one billion baht loss so far due to contamination scare"

[www.non-gm-farmers.com/news\\_details.asp?ID=157](http://www.non-gm-farmers.com/news_details.asp?ID=157)

Non-GM-farmers (source: Hawaii GEAN): "Outrage as study finds 50% of Papayas contaminated with GM"

[www.non-gm-farmers.com/news\\_details.asp?ID=158](http://www.non-gm-farmers.com/news_details.asp?ID=158)

Green Party: "Thailand's papaya trade loss is a GE warning to NZ" [www.greens.org.nz/searchdocs/PR7845.html](http://www.greens.org.nz/searchdocs/PR7845.html)

### **GE sheep to be made in Oz 2.9.04**

New Zealand researchers are about to create a new flock of GE sheep, but this time in Australia. Lead researcher Dr Russell Snell told the Herald that getting approval to do it here would be too costly and would take too long.

The research is into Huntington's disease, a genetic disease which causes involuntary jerking and memory loss in humans. The sheep will be genetically engineered with a copy of the genetic mutation, and one will be killed every three months. Their brains will be sent back to Auckland and compared with normal sheep brains. Researchers said the sheep will not suffer before being killed, not living long enough to exhibit symptoms of the disease.

Dr Robert Anderson, from Physicians and Scientists for Responsible Genetics, said the animals were being subjected to "unnecessary scientific brutality". "Such animal research has proven itself virtually ineffective. To date GE biotechnology hasn't even come close to living up to its PR claims."

[www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?reportID=53009&storyID=3586348](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?reportID=53009&storyID=3586348)

### **European Commission to give go-ahead for GM maize INDEPENDENT 9.9.04**

17 varieties of GM maize are to be made available for planting in the EU after a decision that environmental campaigners claimed could lead to contamination of conventional crops.

The move, the first of its kind by the European Commission, came as the authorities also opened the way to license the import and processing of a GM oilseed rape produced by the biotech company Monsanto.

Environmental campaigners attacked both decisions, claiming that there was no popular mandate for wider use of GM crops. However they welcomed a separate decision by the European Commission to shelve plans for rules on seed purity, which would have set thresholds for GM content.

Under pressure from the US which argues that EU restrictions on GM produce breach global trading rules, Brussels is moving slowly to free up Europe as a market.

A de facto embargo on new GM approvals within the EU ended earlier this year.

Before yesterday's decision, the 17 GM seeds, produced from Monsanto's MON 810 maize, which is modified to

make it resistant to some insects, had been listed for sale only in Spain and France.

But because they had received EU-wide authorisation since 1998, the Commission said it was obliged to include them in a "common catalogue" of seeds available in all 25 EU countries.

David Byrne, EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, described the decision as "logical".

He added: "The maize has been thoroughly assessed to be safe for human health and environment. It has been grown in Spain for years without any known problems. It will be clearly labelled as GM maize to allow farmers a choice."

But Friends of the Earth campaigner Clare Oxborrow described the mover as a "recipe for disaster", adding that consumers "do not want GM food or crops, especially as there are no rules in place to prevent GM contamination." Web Link: [www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?storyID=3590297&thesection=news&thesubsection=world](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?storyID=3590297&thesection=news&thesubsection=world)

### **Destruction of experimental GM coffee**

**AFP, 1.9.04 (Guyana) – translation**

The only experimental culture of GM coffee in Guyana, was destroyed by unknown individuals, reported CIRAD (Center for international co-operation in agronomic research for development).

This test intended to study the resistance of the coffee genetically modified to the "leaf miner", a parasite which is causing increasing damage, especially in Brazil. Environmental impacts, such as the diffusion of pollen, or the impact on the bees and their honey were also being studied. [www.GEinfo.org.nz/092004/03.html](http://www.GEinfo.org.nz/092004/03.html)

### **Public concern over GM foods increases (UK)**

**Agence France Presse, 3.9.04**

More Britons are worried about genetically modified foods, a poll for a consumer rights suggests.

61% of those polled for Which? Magazine had concerns about the use of GM material in food production, up

[from] 56 percent two years ago. The survey of almost 1,000 people saw a 13% rise in the number of people who said they tried to avoid GM food and ingredients, up from 45 % in 2002 to 58 %. Just over 25 % backed growing GM crops in Britain, down from 32 % two years ago. However, there was a rise, from 28 % to 33 %, in numbers satisfied manufacturers are removing GM from their food. [www.GEinfo.org.nz/092004/02.html](http://www.GEinfo.org.nz/092004/02.html)

### **Starlink corn settlement to include interest**

**Associated Press US, 23.8.04**

US farmers will be paid interest on the \$110 million settlement with makers and distributors of genetically altered corn that was mistakenly introduced into the food supply. Payments from the settlement could begin soon after a court hearing on Sept. 2 for farmers who did not grow StarLink corn but suffered from a consumer backlash when it was revealed that it had gotten into the food supply. [www.GEinfo.org.nz/092004/05.html](http://www.GEinfo.org.nz/092004/05.html)

### **Monsanto ripped over Wheat Experiments**

**Cnews 17.8.04**  
(Canada) Field trials of GM wheat are still being conducted in Canada by multinational biotech giant Monsanto despite a pledge in May [to] "discontinue breeding and field-level research" into wheat resistant to the popular herbicide Roundup.

In a letter to Greenpeace, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency confirmed that 16 Monsanto trials of Roundup Ready wheat are continuing "to allow researchers to complete their research." Greenpeace said Monsanto should have torn up the fields as it said it would. [www.GEinfo.org.nz/092004/06.html](http://www.GEinfo.org.nz/092004/06.html)

### **WTO ruling delayed in trans-Atlantic food row**

**Reuters (Switzerland) 27.8.04**

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has put off a decision on whether the European Union broke trade rules by not allowing imports of genetically modified foods. WTO judges are now expected to issue a ruling at the end of

March instead of October in order to let the judges question scientists. [www.GEinfo.org.nz/092004/07.html](http://www.GEinfo.org.nz/092004/07.html)

### **USDA "hijacked" by corporate interests**

**Associated Press (US) 23.7.04**

The US Department of Agriculture has shifted from being a people's agency to an agency for corporate agriculture is claimed by a new report, commissioned by the Agribusiness Accountability Initiative, a network of family farm and public interest groups.

The report, titled "USDA Inc.: How Agribusiness has hijacked regulatory policy at the USDA," calls the USDA "one of the strongest proponents" of GM foods, even though many farmers have been vehement in their opposition, USDA support being attributed to top-ranking USDA officials having ties to biotech companies.

"These industry-linked appointees have helped to implement policies that undermine the regulatory mission of USDA in favor of the bottom-line interests of a few economically powerful companies." [www.GEinfo.org.nz/092004/08.html](http://www.GEinfo.org.nz/092004/08.html)

### **Judge: reveal locations of biopharm crops**

**ENS, 6.8.04 (Hawaii)**  
The US Agriculture Department must disclose the locations of experimental crops genetically modified to grow pharmaceuticals.

Chief Judge David Ezra agreed with the plaintiff, Center for Food Safety, represented by the public interest law firm Earthjustice, that the locations of the biopharm crops is not confidential proprietary business information.

Hawaii has more than 4,000 field test sites for GE crops, more than anywhere else in the world, including more than 24 tests of biopharm crops, Earthjustice says. Earthjustice argued that no biopharm crops have been approved for human or animal consumption, or even for general release into the environment.

Yet the USDA allows these tests to be conducted in open fields, conceals the trials' locations from the public, and in most cases refuses to disclose the substances being grown.

## Peoples Caravan

Hundreds of peasant organizations and supporting NGOs, representing millions of poor Asian farmers, are currently participating in the People's Caravan 2004 for People's Food Sovereignty that is sweeping through 15 countries across Asia and Europe. After a first caravan in 2000, this year's caravan bears the theme "Asserting Our Rights to Land and Food" culminated in Nepal with a rally and Conference on Alternatives to Globalization on September 30.

The People's Caravan 2004 aims to raise awareness on the issues involved in food sovereignty, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), pesticides, GE, agrochemical transnational corporations (TNCs), workers' rights, and the promotion of sustainable agriculture.  
[biotech.indymedia.org/or/2004/09/3391.shtml](http://biotech.indymedia.org/or/2004/09/3391.shtml)

## BRAZIL: Monsanto says to challenge ban on GMO 3/9/04

Monsanto will appeal a legal ban in Brazil on selling its GE Roundup Ready soybeans. Brazil, the world's No. 2 soy producer after the United States, is the last major agricultural exporter to ban GMO food crops. Because of [legal] wrangles, the government last year granted amnesty to planters of illegal GMO soybeans for the current crop. Despite the attempts by Greenpeace and consumer groups to control Roundup Ready soybeans, it now comprises an estimated 30 % of the national crop.  
[biotechimc.org/or/2004/09/3371.shtml](http://biotechimc.org/or/2004/09/3371.shtml)

## USA: Mad Scientists Working to Develop GE Mosquito Repellent 3.9.04

"New insect repellents may work by stopping pesky mosquitoes and flies sniffing out their prey."  
[portland.indymedia.org/en/2004/09/296522.shtml](http://portland.indymedia.org/en/2004/09/296522.shtml)

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

## FRANCE: Scientists create genetically modified 'marathon mice' 1.9.04

"Scientists have discovered a genetic tweak that turns mice into marathoners, but is not likely to be ready for use in humans by the 2008 Olympics, according to a study."  
[biotech.indymedia.org/or/2004/09/3336.shtml](http://biotech.indymedia.org/or/2004/09/3336.shtml)

## URGENT Email Action:

### Protest Brazilian Pres. permitting planting of illegal GE soya

Support Brazil's Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) and the Brazilian Consumer Protection Institute (Idec) and all the other Brazilian groups calling on President Lula not to break his promise on the issue of permitting the planting of illegal GM soya and to ensure the introduction of proper biosafety protection for consumers and the environment. Send an email  
[www.gmwatch.org/proemail1.asp?id=5](http://www.gmwatch.org/proemail1.asp?id=5)

## <http://www.90degrees.net.nz>

90 degrees gives you the latest information on GE issues and actions. Subscribe to 90 degrees for fortnightly updates.

Let's get everyone talking. Ask your friends what they think about GE, and tell them about 90 degrees. **It's our country, so let's make it our choice.**

**Greenpeace pocket GE Free food guides** - are now available from  
[www.greenpeace.org.nz](http://www.greenpeace.org.nz)

## REGISTER YOUR HOME AS A GE FREE ZONE

Pass the info on to all your friends and any folk in rural areas you know support the initiative. Properties registered - 5,351 covering a total 348,005.12 acres.  
[www.gefreeregister.org.nz](http://www.gefreeregister.org.nz)

## GE FREE NZ CONTACTS

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