



GE Free New Zealand In Food and Environment Newsletter August 2006

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

The GE Free movement has won some successes of late with local government realizing that being risk averse is preferable to polluting their own backyard and suffering the potential cost of a clean up. Pg2 Meanwhile the next critical issue will be whether or not a MAF seed testing protocol being developed will allow entry of alfalfa seeds with up to 0.1% contamination into the country.

As you may be aware government ruled against the adoption of country of origin labelling and the latest news shows that unless the consumer acts our kids are likely to be eating GE ice cream on holiday this year. Please do all you can to prevent GE ingredients being used.

Govt opts out of CoOI Labelling

28/06/06 The government pulled out of a joint food standard with Australia last year that would have required New Zealand to introduce mandatory country of origin labelling of food. Despite adoption by Australia of CoOL measures allowing labeling of imported foods, New Zealand foods will NOT be labeled

Q&A session parliament Annette King (Minister for Food Safety) "As it is longstanding Government policy not to support mandatory country-of-origin labelling, and as the Australian-only standard does not change the current situation in New Zealand, no consultation was necessary with parties in Parliament with which the Government had entered either coalition, confidence and supply, or cooperation agreements".

Sue Kedgley "Right to know Bill" speech "It speaks volumes about the contempt that the two major parties

have towards ordinary consumers, that they would deny something as simple and as fundamental as consumers' right to know what is in food and where it comes from. It shows how totally out of touch they are with the concerns of mainstream New Zealand and how they will always put the interests of food producers ahead of the interests of consumers."

Consumers wanted to make informed purchasing decisions on methods of production of food as well as the potential toxicity of chemicals and pollution. The public will be angry that government policy puts trade liberalisation policy ahead of their rights to know where their food comes from

Alfalfa Seed Testing Protocol

Biosecurity NZ (part of MAF) recently consulted the public on seed testing protocol for Lucerne/alfalfa seed. They propose a testing regime similar to that maize, canola and soybean seed which has consistently failed allowing GE pollution into the country. NZ imports Lucerne/alfalfa for sowing and sprouting each year from the US and other countries and two varieties of genetically modified Lucerne/alfalfa recently entered commercial production in the US. The varieties contain genes giving resistance to glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup and other herbicides. www.biosecurity.govt.nz/imports/plant/s/genetically-modified-organisms/current-issues.htm

GE Free NZ feel zero tolerance is extremely important and that seed imports should be restricted to countries where no GE seed is grown. Again contaminated seed will not be labelled and there is a risk of escapes to the wild environment

ICE CREAM with GE ingredients - next summer

Ice cream is very special to New Zealanders and their guests from overseas but soon, new GE technology will be used in ice cream in New Zealand by Unilever producers of Magnum, Walls, Carte D'Or and Ben and Jerry's. The GM protein is produced in transgenic bakers' yeast. Ice-structuring, or antifreeze protein protects the ocean pout in freezing waters by preventing large ice crystals forming; in ice cream and other frozen food it would have the same effect, apparently resulting in a smoother product with less fat. Packaging will not state that there is a GE additive but could call it "ice structuring protein."

As consumers, we need to start showing our concerns now before our kids start buying these products.

Phone the 0800 numbers and start asking for ice cream made without GE technology or email Nick.C.Goddard@unilever.com

He made the following comments in a letter: "rest assured that there is no GM material in any of our ice cream or other food products, nor are we planning to incorporate any GM material in our ice creams or other foods.... a specific protein (Ice Structuring Protein- ISP) *will be used* as a processing aid in the manufacture of ice cream... derived from the fermentation of a GM derived yeast, there will be no GM material in the final ice cream product. We firmly believe that our consumers should have information... to make a fully informed choice... we will be highlighting ISP as an ingredient. Fact sheets, available on our website or our toll-free call centre, will explain in detail ISP, its role and derivation (i.e.: GM yeast).

Regional LTCCP News

Kaipara GE Workshop –19/06/06
Kaipara District Council has been exploring ways to protect communities in the Northland area from the economic risks to conventional and organic food producers from GE contamination, and who should bear liability relating to those risks. Information at the workshop showed that using the Resource Management Act, local authorities can put in place rules regarding GMO land use, which would complement central government requirements under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act. Lobby group, GE Free Northland, is pushing for GMO land use to be classed as a prohibited activity in the Region."

KDC continues to show leadership on the critical GE issue, responding to the concerns and values of Kaipara ratepayers and community groups about (GMOs).

The Council GE workshop was open to the public with presenters Simon Terry from Simon Terry Associates (co-author of the GE report "Community Management of GMOs II- Risks & Response Options", recently commissioned by all the Northland peninsula territorial authorities).

Dr. Royden Somerville, QC (the top RMA QC in the country) author of the accompanying legal opinion (to the GE report "Community Management of GMOs II- Risks & Response Options") and two speakers from central government agencies attended: Russell Harding from the Ministry for the Environment and Libby Harrison from ERMA (Environmental Risk Management Authority).

Dr. Royden Somerville, QC, provided expert advice about the way local authorities can act to protect local communities from the risks of GMOs under the RMA and how this complements the HSNO Act.

Kaipara ratepayers, GE FREE KAIPARA and GE FREE NORTHLAND representatives attended this important Workshop, which provided clarification on a range of important issues (the lack of

strict liability for GMOs, and the ability of local authorities to act on a local level) and are now lobbying KDC to take the next logical step in addressing the risks of GMOs and budget \$10,000 for community consultation on GE at the next KDC full council meeting on 26 July 06. Waitakere City Council, Rodney, Whangarei and Far North District Councils have already done so.

The council's persistence in exploring how to protect communities in Northland stands in stark contrast to the approach taken by the Labour-led government, which continues to ignore the concerns of many eminent scientists, Local Government NZ, local Authorities, primary producers and the majority of New Zealanders.

"Local authorities need to ensure that GMO land use is classed a prohibited activity in the region," said Ms Grammer
www.wdc.govt.nz/portal/ge2005.html

Auckland City Council recently voted (in response to numerous submissions to their draft LTCCP) to join the inter-council Working Party on GMOs and to adopt a precautionary approach to biotechnology in general and GMO land use in particular.*

The motion was carried, 23/06/06, and the resolution now forms part of Auckland Cities Long-Term Council Community Plan 2006-2016.

*The specific wording is as follows:
Chairman's Recommendation: That Auckland City Council join the inter-council Working Party on Genetically Modified Organisms.

Councillor Abel moved in addition: That Auckland City adopts a precautionary approach to the management of biotechnology in general and to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) land uses in particular.

That Auckland City investigate ways to maintain the Isthmus and Hauraki Gulf Islands environment, free of GMOs until outstanding issues such as liability, economic costs and benefits, environmental risks, and cultural effects are resolved. CARRIED

Rodney District Council

RDC made a decision to adopt a strong precautionary approach to GMOs, in response to numerous anti GMO submissions to the RDC draft LTCCP 2006-16.

One submitter D007 (Federated Farmers NZ Inc. based in Hamilton) requested council not to formulate policy concerning GMOs or investigate options for community management of GMOs, stating farmers should be able to respond to market forces and their own judgement.

Rodney decision was to 'Investigate options for community management of genetically modified organisms and adopt a precautionary approach to "Field-trials" or use of genetically modified organisms"

Reasons for Council's decision:
"Council is now well advanced in its investigations of risks and response options in respect of genetically modified organisms. In practical terms Council has undertaken a precautionary approach to date and is about to embark on public consultation subject to the participation of other contributing councils."

Tasman District Council received a number of submissions commenting on the impact of GMOs in Tasman District. In response to submissions, Council made reference in its final LTCCP, including a risk level assessment on the effect of GMOs on the regional economy and a note that Council would expect to be consulted on any proposed GMO releases within the District."

Nelson City Council have ignored a petition by GE Aware Nelson and submissions from the public, and missed the opportunity to consolidate their 2001 declaration 'to aim to be GE Free.' GE Aware Nelson is extremely disappointed by their failure to be proactive.

GE Free New Zealand congratulate all those who have made the effort to get these issues into their long-term community plans. Please send us news of other council decisions.

Beyond GM Food: New Cutting Edge MAS Technology Makes GM Food Obsolete

Jeremy Rifkin

06/07/06 For years, the life science companies-Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer, Pioneer, etc.-have argued that GM food is the next great scientific and technological revolution in agriculture. Now, in an ironic twist, new cutting edge technologies have made gene splicing and transgenic crops obsolete and a serious impediment to scientific progress. Marker Assisted Selection, or MAS is a sophisticated method to greatly accelerate classical breeding. A growing number of scientists believe that MAS, which is already being introduced into the market- will eventually replace GM food. NGOs, like Greenpeace, that have long opposed GM crops, are guardedly supportive of MAS technology.

Rapidly accumulating information about crop genomes is allowing scientists to identify genes associated with traits like yield, scan crop relatives (remaining within a species) for the presence of those genes, then cross breeding those plants with existing commercial varieties to improve the crop, reducing by 50% or more the time needed to develop new plant varieties by pinpointing appropriate plant partners at the gamete or seedling stage.

The continued introduction of GM crops could contaminate existing plant varieties, making the new MAS technology more difficult to use. US corn, soybeans, and canola already "pervasively contaminated with low levels of DNA sequences originating in GE varieties, cleaning up contaminated genetic programs could prove to be as troublesome and expensive in the future as cleaning up computer viruses.

Already plant breeders are talking about "open source genomics", enabling sharing of gene information. The struggle between a younger generation of sustainable agriculture enthusiasts anxious to share genetic information and entrenched company scientists determined to maintain control over the world's seed stocks through patent protection, is likely to be hard fought, especially in the developing world.

How the flood of GM goods was driven off the shelves.

Geoffrey Lean

news.independent.co.uk/environment/article1168240.ece

Seven short years ago, when The Independent on Sunday began its campaign on GM foods and crops, 60 per cent of the products on our supermarket shelves contained modified ingredients.

Now only two GM products are left on sale: Schwartz's Bacon Flavour Bits Salad Topping, and Betty Crocker Bac-Os, neither exactly household names.

Then, too, widespread cultivation of GM crops throughout Britain was thought to be only a year away. No less than 53 of them were confidently awaiting approval. Not a single GM plant is growing anywhere in any British field, and no one expects any to be sown any time in the foreseeable future.

At the time ours appeared a hopeless cause. The giant biotech companies seemed unstoppable, with full backing of the Government, fired by the messianic determination of Tony Blair and backed by the US administration and British scientific establishment.

The Prime Minister privately dismissed public opposition but reckoned without the most powerful force of all, the superwomen (and supermen) of the shopping aisles who, informed of the presence of GM products in their foods and the arguments for and against, simply refused to buy them.

Michael Meacher, the then Environment minister, skilfully persuaded the biotech industry to agree to a three-year halt, pending official field trials.

Environmental campaigners repeatedly pulled up the GM crops, in an attempt to scupper the trials (at one protest Lord Melchett, then head of Greenpeace, was arrested with 20 supporters - only to be acquitted by a jury).

By the time the tests ended, 84% of Britain's had decided they would not touch the GM stuff. The supermarket

chains fell over themselves to clear it from their shelves - and the big food manufacturers rushed to abjure its use.

Monsanto closed its seed cereal business in Britain and Europe, and the industry withdrew the last of the 53 applications it had once assumed would be granted.

Anyone for Betty Crocker Bac-Os?



US laboratory testing transgenic rice with Peruvian children 20/06/06

The Peruvian Medical Association denounced Ventria, pharmaceutical company from the US, experimenting with infants to evaluate the effectiveness of their pharmaceutical rice for use in acute diarrhoea, saying "these genetic changes are not allowed in Peru".

The transgenic rice, modified to produce the protein Lactoferrin is being trialled on 140 children in public hospitals in the Peruvian capital, Lima, and in the locality of Trujillo, with the approval of the Ministry of Health.

In turn, lawyers mounting a defence of children's rights have considered this case as a violation of the laws and the Codes for Children and Adolescents.

"Children, as any other human being, have rights and have the right of freedom in their development and health, which should not be a matter of experimentation, especially when the possible outcomes of the experiments are not known", said Norma Rojas, attorney for Action on Behalf of Children.

www.ventriabio.com/news/ORS%20Article%2005-06%20Final.pdf

Surveys in both hemispheres this month indicate continuing public resistance to GE foods in most of Europe and Australia.

In the USA, another county has declared itself GE-free, and the Center for Food Safety is suing the Food and Drug Administration in an attempt to require mandatory reviews of new GE foods, and labelling. If they are approved. Hundreds of scientists at the FDA are concerned about the agency's ability to fulfil its mission of protecting public health, having reported significant political interference with the FDA's work. The European Food Safety Authority has also been criticised of GMO bias",

Santa Cruz County outlaws GE plants

San Francisco Chronicle, 24/06/06
The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors approved a moratorium on GE crops, citing the failure of regulatory agencies to address possible health risks. "The fact there is no labelling - when we are as a nation really concerned about consumer rights - is shocking," said Supervisor Ellen Pirie. The subcommittee found that "the biotechnology industry is conducting case studies, research or field tests on 27 of our 39 commercial crops."

Another portent of the pending proliferation of GE fruit and vegetable crops is Monsanto's purchase of Seminis, the world's largest developer, grower, and marketer of vegetable seeds. This is likely the first move to extend Monsanto's GE technology into commercially grown fruits and vegetables.

www.GEinfo.org.nz/072006/04.html

GM Free intentions defended

29/06/06 Tasmania must maintain its freedom from GM technology or risk valuable agricultural exports, the Primary Industry Minister has told a Budget estimates hearing.

Mr Llewellyn said he could not support coexistence between GM and traditional crops as it had major ramifications for Tasmania.

"We are positioning Tasmania as GM-free and we don't want to fall in with

those who would target less-than discerning buyers," Mr Llewellyn said. The managing director of a major Japanese importer of Tasmanian products has said if the state moved down the GM line, it would cut its ties with the state.

www.GEinfo.org.nz/072006/09.html

"New German Liability Law Carries Lessons for NZ"

Sustainability council of NZ, 03/07/06
The German Government has sought to explicitly allocate liability for the financial risks arising from the cultivation of GMOs and to protect non-GM farmers. A sharp contrast to New Zealand's law that leaves major gaps and implicitly allocates risk and costs to innocent parties.

New Zealand law specific to GMOs imposes strict liability only if an activity is carried out contrary to an ERMA approval. No statutory liability for damage arises from unexpected effects or inadequate regulatory control of known risks.

Internationally, liability law is emerging as the crux issue for regulation of GMO cultivation. Austria and Norway were early leaders in establishing a strict liability standard for damage arising from GMOs in the mid 1990s. More recent reviews by the Governments of Denmark, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom have also determined that conventional farmers should not bear the costs of GMO contamination.

Germany's recently revised law addresses key issues for non-GM farmers, including:

- 1) Details of any GMO planting must be made available in advance on a publicly accessible register;
- 2) There is no requirement for harm to have been foreseeable for a claim to succeed;
- 3) Following 'good practice' (for example, efforts by GM adopters to limit the flow of GMOs beyond the farm boundary) is of itself not a defence.

A second stage of law reform, including the proposed creation of a Compensation fund is scheduled to proceed during the northern summer.

www.sustainabilitynz.org/docs/GermanLiabilityLawforGMCultivation.pdf

EU consumers: GE food a risk to society

Reuters News 23/06/06
Most Europeans believe that GM foods should not be encouraged and see biotech crops as posing a risk to society, a survey, conducted by a group of academics [for] the European Commission's polling arm

Eurobarometer, showed. 25,000 EU citizens polled in nearly all the bloc's 25 countries remained sceptical about biotech used in agriculture. Average support among EU citizens for GMO foods ranked at 27%. The Survey found "Europeans think that GM food should not be encouraged, it is widely seen as not being useful, as morally unacceptable and as a risk for society" and that "New regulations on GM crop commercialisation and labelling of GM food appears to have done little to allay the public's anxieties about food biotechnology"

www.GEinfo.org.nz/072006/01.html

Aussies still wary of GE food

ABC Science Online, 30/06/06
Australians are becoming more comfortable with new technologies like stem cell research but still have strong reservations about GM foods, a survey, conducted by the Australian Centre for Emerging Technologies and Society, shows. Respondents when asked about GM crops or animals, were decidedly more negative than in 2004. Only 30% said they were comfortable with GM plants for food. The survey also found that just 18% of people were comfortable with genetically modifying animals for food.

www.GEinfo.org.nz/072006/02.html

Activists tear up patents for Taro

Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 21/06/06
Chants honouring the Hawaiian people's kinship with taro, began a ceremony that culminated in Hawaiians tearing up copies of patents on the plant.

Since January, Hawaiians have been pushing the University of Hawaii to give up patents, obtained in 2002, on three varieties of disease-resistant taro it developed. "UH did not invent taro, and they had no right to own it or license it to farmers," Kaua'i taro farmer

www.GEinfo.org.nz/072006/03.html

No consensus on global GE labelling

FoodNavigator.com 28/06/06

A current move towards harmonising global regulations on GM food is a good thing, though agreement on labelling remains as far away as ever, an IFT conference heard this week. "US soybean exports to the EU for example have decreased from \$2.5 billion in 1996 to \$874 m in 2004."

It is difficult to see how this will be resolved. However a recent USDA report describes 3 scenarios for GM food in 2015.

The rosy view is that biotechnology is embraced globally. A second view sees GM food products being traded universally within continents, but without any real global harmonisation. The third view is that 'biotech goes niche' [i.e.], the barriers that currently inhibit the global trade of GM food products, regulatory or consumer-based, are never overcome.

www.GEinfo.org.nz/072006/07.html

Consumer group sues FDA over biotech foods

Reuters, 7/06/06

A lawsuit filed by the Center for Food Safety seeks to force the US government to conduct mandatory reviews of GE foods and require labelling of such foods once approved. The suit against the Food and Drug Administration comes after years of lobbying by environmental and consumer groups for more stringent regulation and labelling of biotech crops.

The US requires no independent testing of these crops or the food products they are used in, does not mandate what data companies must submit for review, and does not require that foods that contain biotech crops be labelled, CFS said.

Last year scientists found that bean genes engineered into pea plants created a potentially dangerous allergen. CFS said the tests that exposed that potential hazard have not been conducted on any of the GM foods currently marketed in the US.

www.GEinfo.org.nz/072006/08.html

Biotech food tears rifts in Europe

New York Times, 5/06/06 (Greece)

In this famously fractious country, there is one thing on which almost all Greeks agree: They do not want GM crops grown, sold or eaten.

"All political parties are opposed," said Theodore Koliopanos, a former deputy environment minister, "which is odd because we disagree on everything else."

"The environment minister who gives in and allows GMO's into this country will never be minister again," said Nikos Lappas, head of Greece's largest farmers' union. "For farmers, forcing GMO's would be economic suicide, since our market doesn't want them. If our market doesn't buy it, and insurers won't insure us, how can we grow it?" Producers of GM products are aggressively pursuing their case at the WTO "The first visit any new minister in Greece gets is from the US ambassador saying, 'You need to have GMO's,' " said Mr. Koliopanos. "The pressure is incredible."

www.GEinfo.org.nz/072006/10.html



Poplar trees and grass may make fine gas for cars

[California] Poplar trees and switch grass are on track to become important weapons in national security defense. The Joint Genome Institute is betting genetic research can make those plants ideal for producing ethanol, grain alcohol that can be used as vehicle fuel.

They will also try to increase the tree's percentage of cellulose, the fodder for making ethanol, and make the cellulose easier to break down.

Tuskan envisions fields of poplars that grow so fast and with so little lignin that they will not be able to stand on their own.

www.contracostatimes.com/mld/cctimes/14896223.htm

French company granted permit to grow vaccine maize crops

ISIS Press Release, 27/07/06

Transgenic maize with monoclonal antibodies grown in France, modified with human genes for producing monoclonal antibodies had been approved for commercial planting in France since 2005.

This amounts to an illegal massive clinical trial of monoclonal antibodies known to cause severe side effects including death Dr Mae Wan Ho and other scientists are calling for a ban on crops producing pharmaceuticals and the withdrawal of EU funding for such projects. Read article at

www.i-sis.org.uk/transgenicMaize.php

Ecological studies on herbicide resistance

Trends in Plant Science, oi:10.1016, (Online) 16/06/06

Recent publications demonstrate two ecological effects of transgenic crop plants that were not anticipated: the widespread emergence of glyphosate-resistant weeds and the formation of a metabolic herbicidal residue. Both appear to be due to the increased use of glyphosate rather than the GE modification.

Opinions collected from the literature point towards a certain degree of resistance mismanagement and an inadequate testing of the ecological effects of extensive glyphosate use.

www.GEinfo.org.nz/072006/05.html

Brazil GE crackdown - \$30M cost?

Dow Jones News 23/06/06

The discovery of illegal Monsanto transgenic cotton plants on 18,000 ha of Brazilian cotton farms caused a quarantine of those fields by federal authorities this week and will likely amount to \$30 million in losses, according to Brazil's Cotton Producers Association, or Abrapa.

"Farmers are more than a bit worried. Some say that they didn't know the plants were GMO," said Abrapa President Joao Carlos Jacobsen. Farmers would not be permitted to plant cotton on those fields in the 2006-07 crop.

www.GEinfo.org.nz/072006/06.html

Toxic GE Crops 15/07/06
www.scoop.co.nz/stories/SC0607/S00025.htm

Genetically modified crops highly toxic to humans but insects seem to thrive on them. Two research teams in England and Venezuela have discovered something alarming about the new GM crops filled with insecticide.

The insects not only eat them, they seem to thrive on them.

Scientists at Imperial College in London and the Universidad Simon Rodrigues in Caracas found that the insects that the chemical additive was supposed to kill were not only feeding on the poison, but the stuff seems to help them thrive.

GM Probiotic Bacteria in Gene Therapy

Natural probiotic bacteria promote health, but GM probiotics are downright dangerous. – A call for a ban on GM probiotics as the first clinical trial carried out.

Probiotic bacteria are beneficial bacteria living in the human gut that are now widely used as food additives for their health-promoting effects. These bacteria have co-evolved with their human host over millions of years. Their contributions to health and to the development of the host's immune system depend on an intricate web of bacteria - bacteria and bacteria-host relationships that if thrown out of balance will most likely result in disease. For that reason alone, probiotics should never be subjected to genetic modification, let alone genetic modification for use directly on human beings.

www.i-sis.org.uk/GMPBIGT.php

Mass Deaths in Sheep Grazing on Bt Cotton

ISIS Press Release 03/05/06

At least 1,800 sheep were reported dead from severe toxicity after grazing on Bt post-harvest cotton fields in just four villages in Andhra Pradesh India. The symptoms and post-mortem findings strongly suggest they died from severe toxicity. This latest report confirms the findings of an earlier fact-finding investigation, on illnesses in cotton farm workers and handlers caused by Bt cotton in another cotton-growing state, Madhya Pradesh, in India. Similar illnesses and deaths among villagers in the Philippines

linked to exposure to Bt maize since 2003. Similar Bt toxins from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* incorporated in GE crops are involved in all cases. But the regulators have done nothing.

Genetically Engineered Crops may produce herbicide inside our intestines

www.curezone.com/blogs/m.asp?f=67&i=493

Pioneer Hi-Bred's website boasts that their Liberty Link GE corn survives doses of Liberty herbicide, which would normally kill corn. The reason, they say, is that the herbicide becomes "inactive in the corn plant." [2] They fail to reveal, however, that after you eat the GM corn, some inactive herbicide may become reactivated inside your gut and cause a toxic reaction. In addition, a gene that was inserted into the corn might transfer into the DNA of your gut bacteria, producing long-term effects. These are just a couple of the many potential side effects of GM crops that critics' say put the public at risk.

Liberty herbicide (also marketed as Basta, Ignite, Rely, Finale and Challenge) can kill a wide variety of plants. It can also kill bacteria, fungi and insects, and has toxic effects on humans and animals.

US fails to dump international GM labelling Guideline

The United States tried and failed to dump an international guideline for labelling genetically modified food at a United Nations food standards committee held May 1 - 5 in Ottawa, Canada. The labelling guideline suggests a minimum standard of GMO labelling for countries to adopt. "Mandatory GMO labelling is essential for consumers right to know and to track any unexpected health effects," says Michael Hansen, Research Associate at the Consumers Union, who represented Consumers International at the committee.

The US is the main opponent of biotech labelling and led the minority camp trying to prevent a final guideline. After failing to dump the guideline, the US nearly won a compromise that would shelve discussions on GM labelling for 3-5 years.

Consumers International challenged

the US position and many countries followed. 14 European Community countries and 15 other nations requested continued discussions for a labelling guideline, which left the US and seven supporting countries in a minority.

Labelling enables concerned consumers to choose non-GM products, and so provides a market for non-GM farmers and food producers.

The guideline, although in draft form, still has international legal status and offers countries with GM labelling some protection from a World Trade Organization suit.

Should we worry about Soya in our food?

The Guardian 25/07/06
Whether you know it or not, you'll probably be eating soy today. It's in 60% of all processed food, from cheese to ice cream, baby formula to biscuits. But should it carry a health warning? In 2002, the British government's expert committee concluded that in general the health benefits claimed for soy were not supported by clear evidence and judged that there could be risks from high levels of consumption for certain age groups.

...babies fed exclusively on Soya Formula could receive the oestrogenic equivalent, based on body weight, of five birth control pills a day.

...Soya contains toxins and plant oestrogens powerful enough to disrupt women's menstrual cycles in experiments. It also appeared damaging to the thyroid.

www.guardian.co.uk

USDA Proposes to Deregulate its Own Transgenic Plum

ISIS Press Release 11/07/06

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has said that its Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has received a petition from its Agricultural Research Service (ARS) seeking non-regulated status for a transgenic plum designated transformation event C5, genetically engineered to resist infection by plum poxvirus (PPV). This is the first temperate transgenic tree proposed for non-regulated status. Others are certain to follow including transgenic forest trees, which would be really disastrous for the world's forests.

www.i-sis.org.uk/transgenicPlum.php

TAKE ACTION

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those around the country who are involved in GE Free New Zealand at present.

This article below shows how hard Claire Bleakley our Chairperson has worked on behalf of GE Free NZ. All our committee members give their time to the issue without any financial compensation. We would love to encourage more of our members to assist us in this work. Please come to the AGM on 27th August (See P8) and see how you can be involved

This year, on behalf of GE Free NZ, I have been part of the New Zealand Food Safety Authority NZFSA Consumer forum, comprising meetings every 6 months to discuss consumer issues.

Research money is given to the forum to carry out research. GE Free proposed a study on Glyphosate be carried out on soy and corn. It is uncertain as to whether this will eventuate.

I have attended a meeting in Wellington with ERMA, where Libby Harrison has clarified GE concerns, particularly regarding the disposal of milk and the poor reporting on the GE pine tree trial. For more info see GE Free press releases.

I was also asked by Kaiwhenua Organics to be an expert witness with Linda Grammer. We presented to Waikato District Council on the issue of keeping the Waikato GE Free until liability, segregation and safety issues had been worked out. The presentation was very well accepted and the Council agreed to consult with Northland over a precautionary approach. GE Free Waikato, Whangaroa, Kai Whenua Organics were absolutely brilliant and put the case for a GE Free region succinctly and well. Great work.

I organized a successful meeting with MfE, GE Free (NZ), Bio Gro, Linda Grammer, Rural Women, Catherine Iremonger, & Sustainable Future. GE Free was also asked to present an update to the ECO conference. This

was very well received."

I have been in contact with Judy Carmen in Western Australia, an epidemiologist; She is putting together a research proposal for GE foods after the recent GE pea results shocked many in the scientific field.

The Centre for Integrated Research in Biosafety (Director Dr Jack Heinemann) wrote detailed and thorough submissions to FSANZ especially Mon LY038. It is good that this Institute is so approachable and prepared to do such an important job pointing out possible adverse effects in a clear and robust scientific manner.

I have worked with many groups and shared much information on behalf of GE Free (NZ). I have requested and examined AgResearch Annual Reports, letters from SCION. OIA requests from NZFSA and detailed 600 pages on FSANZ consultation over GE.

The Media has reported a few issues and Rural Report on National Radio lunchtime news has covered many of our reports on GE issues pertaining to farming. Claire Bleakley

Choosing Genes for future Children Regulating Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis,

is the first major report from the three-year multidisciplinary project which draws together a team of New Zealand and international researchers in Law, Bioethics, Science, Maori and Paediatrics to examine whether, how and to what

extent, human genome-based technologies should be regulated. The-350-page report was released at Parliament on August 1st 2006.

Corn which could cause diabetes on the brink of release in NZ

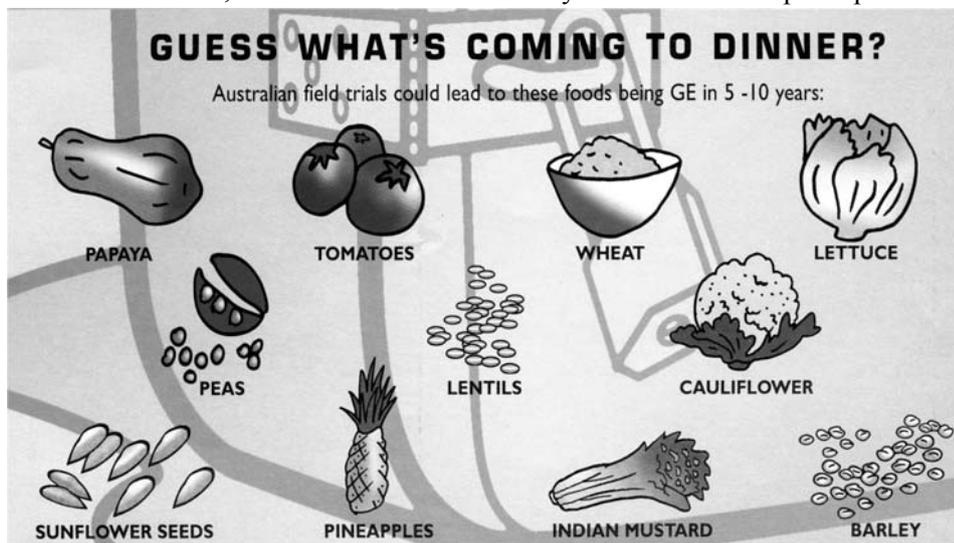
Green Party Press Release 13/06/06

A draft recommendation by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) for an approval for a GE corn could have serious health implications for New Zealanders. "Only the New Zealand and Australian Food Safety Ministers can stop this risk to our health by rejecting the recommendation when they meet in Australia shortly," Green Party Co-Leader Jeanette Fitzsimons says.

The corn, High-Lysine Corn LY038, is produced by seed giant Monsanto, who have applied for its release in New Zealand to be used in animal feed. It is genetically modified to contain levels of the amino acid lysine at substantially higher levels than are found in other corn varieties.

Lysine itself is not a health risk, but when high levels are cooked in combination with sugars, which are also present in the corn, compounds called AGEs are produced which have been implicated in causing Alzheimer's disease, diabetes and several other serious health conditions.

"It is very alarming that this corn variety is so close to being approved for release in New Zealand. While Monsanto insists that it will only be used for animal feed, they are applying for approval as a human food so they don't have to keep it separate."



IMPORTANT BREAKING NEWS

Below a link to an application by Syngenta for approval of a corn as "safe for human consumption" even though it is intended to be used as biofuel... Obviously Syngenta knows that it cannot prevent contamination of food crops. FSANZ appears complicit in approving for human consumption a corn that is intended for biofuels. www.foodstandards.gov.au/standardsdevelopment/applications/application580foodd3241.cfm

Various GE Free groups meet MfE.

Wellington 27/04/06
Key stakeholders, GE Free NZ, GE Free Northland, Rural Women NZ, Bio-Gro, all discussed their concerns about biosecurity/ new organisms with a focus on Genetically Modified Organisms(GMOs) and the gaps/flaws in the HSNO Act. ERMA said as an operational agency, it follows the HSNO act, despite flaws or the fact that liability isn't adequately addressed in some instances.

We needed to determine who to approach about problems with the Act and the failure of central government to act on key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Genetic Modification in 2001. eg 14.3 - that govt establish the office of Parliamentary Commissioner on Biotechnology, and key research should be done into gaps of knowledge and high risk areas like Horizontal Gene Transfer and 7.5 - that states wherever possible non food animals, or animals less likely to find their way into the food chain, be used as bioreactors rather than animals that are a common source of food.

We will continue to try to establish to what extent the recommendations are being addressed.

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 - 5398 covering a total 353,307.45 acres. www.gefreeregister.org.nz

When you have finished with your newsletter, pass it on ...

First Documentary on GE Trees

A Silent Forest: The Growing Threat, Genetically Engineered Trees', 45 min docu narrated by Dr. David Suzuki on Available for purchase at www.customflix.com/207574. info@globaljusticeecolog

"The Future of Food"

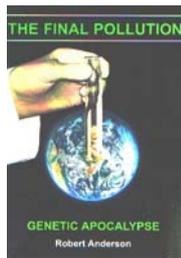
Videos are now available in NZ Price \$25 per DVD postage for more info contact us at Head Office. A fantastic documentary, the film is an effective tool in educating people at all levels of awareness about the GE issue.

T Shirts natural unbleached cotton with rainbow GE Free NZ logo \$20.00 incl.P&P from Head office. Bumper stickers + GE Free corflute signs also available see website.

Robert Anderson

The Ultimate War Crime reveals the truth about use of depleted uranium (DU) weapons in modern war zones. Most vulnerable are the children. Profits from the book will go towards medicines for Iraqi children.

The Ultimate War Crime, NZ \$15.00, including delivery in NZ.



Also available, *The Final Pollution*.

Allan Baddock (Editor, *Organic NZ*) says "everything you'd expect from Robert Anderson - a straightforward, easy to read examination

of the GE debate from all sides. *The Final Pollution* costs NZ\$24.95, including delivery within NZ.

Please send cheque with book orders to R G & J Anderson Books, PO Box 8188, Cherrywood, Tauranga Enquiries 64 7 576 5721 roberta@clear.net.nz.

GE Free AGM Arts Centre, Band Rotunda, Oriental Bay Wellington 9:30 am Sunday 27 August 2006 All members welcome

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