

# GE Free New Zealand

In Food and Environment

Spring Newsletter - September 2002

## We don't want contamination, we don't need our seed controlled.

The recent cases of GE contamination raise serious questions.

- Will any cleanup have to be paid for by the taxpayer?
- Who is liable? (See P3) Are there patent infringements?
- How much powers over government policy do companies like Novartis actually have?
- Is there a conflict of interest between biosecurity, agriculture and trade that may affect GE policy?
- Should Jim Sutton have responsibility for all three portfolios?
- Why is a 1% contamination allowable when testing is available up to 0.01%?
- How can we be sure 'comingling' of crops is not happening to hasten the spread of GE crops and profit from patent infringements?
- Is there any research to ensure contamination cannot cause harm via soil flora and fauna?

These are the questions we need to be asking our representatives and central government if we don't wish to see more contaminated crops in New Zealand and do not want to lose our right to eat GE Free food.

One of the sites where maize seed from the recent contamination, was grown was in the same area as previously used by Corson Grain for testing Ciba-Geigy's GE maize in the mid 90's. The company admitted that it grew GM maize as far back as 1990s, in a "controlled nursery environment" from 1994-1998 "This variant now belongs to Dow chemicals since their take over of Mycogen. (See P6) Genes from this genetic variant were found in this years non GE crop.

Permitted under the IAG (old regulations on GE crops) this trial and others planted at Pioneer facilities in Pukekohe in 1997 may have contaminated crops via the transfer of genetic material through soil organisms, eg. mycorrhiza or via pollen.

The initial exposé of the planting of contaminated seed and the behaviour of the government and their regulatory agencies came in a book from Nicky Hager 'Seeds of Distrust' available by mail order from Craig Potton. Price \$24.95 Order from website: [www.craigpotton.co.nz](http://www.craigpotton.co.nz)

Published on 10<sup>th</sup> July, the book caused a furore, documenting how in November 2000, in the middle of the Royal Commission, government was told that a 5.6 tonne consignment of sweet corn seeds from the United States had been found to be contaminated with GE sweet corn seeds. By this time thousands of GE sweet corn plants were growing in 3 regions of New Zealand - Gisborne, Hawkes Bay and Blenheim - and over half the seeds were still due to be planted.

Instead of destroying the crops and forgoing further planting, Government appear to have made 'ad hoc policy decisions that ignored entirely the laws and proper procedures.'

Lobbyists representing biotech seed firm Novartis suggested contamination was 'inevitable', and that New Zealand should be a 'world-leader' in setting 'acceptable' levels of contamination as 0.5% content of GE seeds in crops. Bas Walker from ERMA stated "At no stage have we said, categorically, that there was no contamination." **Helen Clark offered a select committee inquiry into the "Corngate" saga. We need to demand there is one!** "If anyone else attacks the integrity of public servants, they better look out." Barry Carbon, (ex Aus CSIRO) new CEO NZ Environment Ministry.

The government and Life Sciences industry manipulation of contamination issues.- **Their myths:**

**'That we are no longer GE Free'.** *The contamination of one crop gives us all the more reason to STOP further contamination. New Zealand must insist on the highest level of testing of all imported seeds, an audit of present crops considered at risk and*

*rigorous clean-ups of GE contaminated sites.*

**'That people have been eating GE foods safely for years'...***How do we know as there is no health monitoring? A recent first in UK GE research found that by eating one meal, some stomach bacteria adopted GE traits. Chemical effects often take at least a generation to become evident and only then proven if the likely disease causing component is identified.*

**That we can grow GE alongside non GE crops ...***The recent contamination events prove it is not that easy. Recent research also shows that distances between crops have been insufficient and that pollen travels a lot further than originally anticipated.*

**That the public have a choice to choose GE free food....***There is as yet little labelling of GE ingredients, although due in December and 1% (accidental) contamination will be permitted. If commercial GE crops spread there will be no choice.*

*A new GM Free label may be allowed after an expensive auditing and testing regime is introduced by Agriculture—YET free spot-checks made by the Ministry of Health will effectively subsidise big business using GE to the detriment of those companies avoiding it.*

**'That it impossible to test for GE at low levels & be confident of results.'***A 0.01% test is available and can be used.*

**'That many countries are growing commercial GE crops.'***Only 4 countries grow 98% of GE crops: USA, Canada, Argentina and China. Even these are getting out of GE crops.*

**'That New Zealand is losing out economically due to GE over-regulation.'***US food industry has lost billions in exports since introducing GM crops. US maize prices are at their lowest for 30 years.*

## TOWARDS A REFERENDUM

Many people are considering if a national referendum will help encourage the Labour government to act in the national interest rather than in the interests of the biotech business-lobby.

The central need for greater public education is generally accepted, and recently confirmed by a HortResearch study revealing that over 50% of New Zealanders do not know that "transgenics" (ie moving a gene from an animal into a plant) is possible. Education and creating public awareness of the Government's plans to allow GE releases must continue. Moreover, the government is duty bound to offer a referendum before allowing a first commercial release first "commercial GE release" National debate has to take place.

The international debate is underway on environmental and human health impacts, food security, patents, Liability, and protection of basic rights for all people. The link between enforced use of GE and trade deals under WTO rules is one of the biggest threats to protecting the public interest. Political leaders like Helen Clark, Jim Anderton and Peter Dunne have a duty to follow a precautionary approach by halting commercial GE release for 5 years. This could be backed by a referendum if they haven't the insight and courage to do it themselves.

How much respect there is for community values and protection of civil society interests in the face of commercial technology like GE may be signalled by ERMA's decision on AgResearch's 10-year GE cows project GMD 2028. The sidelining of the Bio Ethics Council - whose advice has not been sought and which has yet to become operational, adds to the many other concerns, including biosecurity, animal welfare and the scientific risks. The advice from ERMA's own Maori advisory group is that the application should not proceed at this time, and this was

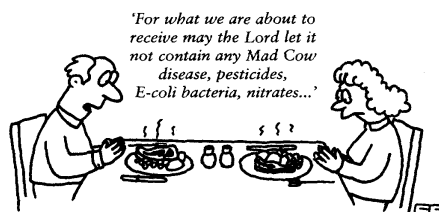
the message of the majority of hundreds of submissions to ERMA. The government review of ERMA must recognise that it is impossible to release GM organisms "conditionally" and that our GE-free status must be protected.

The least the government can do to maintain any legitimacy on this issue is to initiate its own referendum, with a balanced information campaign giving the different views on the debate. It may appear an impossible dream that the democratic process and citizens' rights might be served by the government holding a referendum. But this dream is much more desirable than the nightmare of GE releases currently being proposed for New Zealand. *Jon Carapiet*

A useful summary of GE news is regularly available from [www.GEInfo.org.nz](http://www.GEInfo.org.nz)

## FOOD ISSUES

**First research using human volunteers, commissioned by UK Food Standards Agency substantiates concerns.** The research shows gut bacteria do take up transgenic material from GE foods, thus using antibiotic marker genes in genetically engineered foods may well add to the growing antibiotic resistance among patients. Patients prescribed the antibiotics to which these bacteria have become resistant, could find those antibiotics ineffective. In the USA, drug-resistant infections in humans increased significantly from 0.8 percent in 1996 to 3 percent in 1998.



\*Survival of ingested DNA in the gut <[www.foodstandards.gov.uk/science/sciencetopics/gmfoods/gm\\_reports](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk/science/sciencetopics/gmfoods/gm_reports)>: (2) 17.7.02 GM genes found in hu-

man gut, John Vidal [www.guardian.co.uk/gmdebate/Story/0,2763,76666,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/gmdebate/Story/0,2763,76666,00.html)

**Tests show GM crop taints honey two miles away** 15.9.02 Evidence that genetically modified (GM) crops can contaminate food supplies for miles around has been revealed in independent tests commissioned by the UK Sunday Times. The tests found alien GM material in honey from beehives two miles from a site where GM crops were being grown under government supervision. It is believed to have been carried there by bees gathering pollen in the GM test-sites. The disclosure, showing that GM organisms can enter the food chain without consumers - or even farmers - knowing they are present, will undermine assurances by Tony Blair and ministers that such crops can be tested in Britain without contaminating the food chain. [www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2087-416027,00.html](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2087-416027,00.html)

**Drug genes could enter human food chain** New Scientist, 6.7.02 (UK) The rules the US government is proposing for field tests of crops that have been genetically modified to produce pharmaceutical products are not strict enough to prevent the contamination of food crops, experts have told New Scientist. Proposed rules are based on flawed science, loopholes allow them to be bypassed, and companies are not required to disclose what genes are added. The National Academy of Sciences report says some of the USDA's rules have no clear scientific rationale, eg. the isolation distance for corn is simply double the 200 metres it recommends for the production of GM seeds with an assumption is that this will reduce contamination to 0.1%. Norman Ellstrand, from a committee that reviewed the regulations argues that to be certain the food supply is safe, only plants that aren't grown for food should be used to make drugs. Full item: [www.GEInfo.org.nz/062002/02.htm](http://www.GEInfo.org.nz/062002/02.htm)

## **MAF proposes to test all incoming maize seed for contamination** 1.8.02

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's new testing regime will check all imports imported seeds of both sweet corn and maize for contamination with genetically engineered (GE) DNA, not the one in three, as originally proposed. Over 700 submissions were received! From October 1, canola seed imports will be tested, with plans to test soybean seeds from January 1, 2003. A potential new loophole, however is that tests will not be required if MAF is satisfied that the source country has sufficient systems in place "to provide a level of assurance equivalent to testing every consignment". GE Free New Zealand believes MAF continues to put our biosecurity at risk.  
[www.maf.govt.nz/gmseeds](http://www.maf.govt.nz/gmseeds)

## **Spread of GE-contaminated seeds cannot be ruled out.** 16.8.02

Biosecurity Minister Jim Sutton said neighbouring crops may have been affected by GE-contaminated maize seeds found in Pukekohe and Gisborne but that 'it was too early to withdraw New Zealand's claim of being "GE-free"'. 30 tonnes of contaminated seeds were destroyed at Auckland Airport's incinerator, whilst the source of contamination has still not been determined. Australian importer, Pacific Seeds, has 10% of the NZ maize seed market, Manager Nick Gardner, was reported to be mystified by the contamination at 0.5 percent. The harvested seed, hybridised from four lines of US parent stock, was apparently certified GE-free last year but no MAF testing regime was then in place. Pacific Seeds had contract growers hybridise crops from imported seed from Monsanto and Garst Seed.

*Gene constructs found in the latest incident include GM corn lines Bt-176 corn and MON 810 approved by ANZFA for food in NZ. Other lines found at Gisborne and/or Pukehoe, apparently include MON 802 and MON 809 which are not approved. Results of further overseas testing are to be released by MAF on their website.*

[www.maf.govt.nz/gmseeds](http://www.maf.govt.nz/gmseeds)

## **A recent Law Commission report into legal liability in regard to**

**GMOs, held that "the current statute and common law will not ensure that all damage that could potentially be caused by genetically modified organisms will be compensated"**. This arises from special features of GMO's including:

- \* their potentially "catastrophic levels of harm" and "irreversible damage";
- \* the difficulty in assessing the magnitude of potential damage;
- \* the difficulty and expense for plaintiffs in proving the extent of damage;
- \* the ethical and spiritual concerns some parts of society have about genetically modified organisms.

The report suggests that the issue of a liability regime and who should be held accountable must be widely debated and clearly agreed upon.

[www.lawcom.govt.nz/Documents/Publications/NZLC\\_GMO\\_.pdf](http://www.lawcom.govt.nz/Documents/Publications/NZLC_GMO_.pdf)

## **UNITED FUTURE'S stance on GE**

"We support an extremely cautious approach to GE." Indeed we feel that Government decisions following the RCIs report were at the "outer limit of acceptability. We support the current moratorium, and say that it should not be lifted until the Government is satisfied the appropriate regulatory policy is in place." Write to them now  
[www.unitedfuture.org.nz/ge.html](http://www.unitedfuture.org.nz/ge.html)

## **Farmers can't trust maize seed!**

**8.8.02** Karaka farmer David Yates says he can't trust seed merchants and may not plant maize this year, after seed grown up the road at Pukekohe tested positive for traces of GMOs. He's learned not to trust merchants touting either chemicals or seed. "My health slowly deteriorated and my immune system is shot to pieces after being exposed to 2,4,D and other chemicals that we used to control lucerne flea," said David  
[www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?storyID=2349849&thesection=news&thesubsection=general](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?storyID=2349849&thesection=news&thesubsection=general)

**US Trade agreement depends on GE** According to the Life Science Network New Zealand is most unlikely to be able to negotiate a free trade agreement with the US if the moratorium is extended. 15.7.02

**New advisory group to Minister for Biosecurity set up.** The Biosecurity

Council gives a forum for biosecurity policy issues. The Director of MAF Biosecurity Authority, CEOs of various ministries with biosecurity responsibilities and interests, as well as Maori interests and regulatory agencies are members. DoC, Taranaki Regional Council, primary production industry, environmental organizations are represented and John Hellström is chair.

The Biosecurity Consultative Forum is a sub-committee of this Council with reps of sector agencies, associations and groups with biosecurity interests and aims to facilitate an exchange of information. Representatives included come from the National Council of Women, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, Environment and Conservation Organisations of NZ (ECO) and Soil and Health Association of NZ  
[www.biostrategy.govt.nz/involved/sag.php?nav=high](http://www.biostrategy.govt.nz/involved/sag.php?nav=high)

## **Wrightson halts GE research**

26.8.02 Director Allan Freeth said the company decided to suspend investment in GE research. \$600,000 to \$800,000 would be spent this year protecting patents. \$2.5 million has been spent over past 2 years on GE. "We are going to try and use some of our findings to improve traditional plant-breeding techniques."  
[www.nzherald.co.nz/business/businessstorydisplay.cfm?storyID=2351135&](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/businessstorydisplay.cfm?storyID=2351135&)

**Natural foods are New Zealand's point of difference.** 18.7.02 John McCarthy. As a farmer / Meat Board director, I endorse the Sustainability Council's initiative on genetic modification. (See back page)

Their views represent the disquiet of a large percentage of middle New Zealand whose views remain largely unheard and unrepresented.. there does not seem to be any middle ground. My opinion is that it is a mistake to regard science as the sole arbiter of this debate and misleading to continually contrast organics and GM as the only parties affected by this discussion.

This simplistic view ignores the huge investment in the "naturalness" factor made over generations as New Zealand's point of difference.

**Percy Schmeiser loses appeal but will seek judgement at Supreme Court.** 9.9.02

Canadian Federal Court of Appeal decided in favour of Monsanto Canada, Inc. dismissing all 17 points of contention. It ruled that Schmeiser had infringed the patent on Monsanto GE canola. **The mere presence of the patented plants constitutes infringement;** a farmer who knows or ought to know that the Roundup-resistant variety is on their land and who saves and re-uses seed from it will be considered a patent infringer; and even if the farmer makes no money from the existence of the Roundup Ready canola on their land, the patent is still infringed. Schmeiser said "If I lose at the Supreme Court, then I've lost the battle for farmers all over the world, and for their right to use their own seed. It would mean "total control of the seed supply by multinationals like Monsanto, which has found a way to do it, and that's through patent law." [www.cropchoice.com](http://www.cropchoice.com)

**The secret plan to combine GM seeds with normal crops.** 20.8.02

The UK Government is secretly backing plans to let contaminated seed be grown commercially in Britain. Supporting EU moves to make it legal for conventional seed for crops eg. maize and oilseed rape to be tainted by GM genes at a rate of one in 200 plants. The contamination would not have to be declared on the label of seed sold to farmers, and environmental groups say the proposal amounts to the introduction of GM by stealth.

Environment Minister Michael Meacher admitted that Britain and the rest of Europe are under pressure from the U.S. government to accept GM. American farmers are routinely growing GM crops and the Bush administration is desperate to remove any blocks on their efforts to export food around the world.

Gregory Conko of Competitive Enterprise Inst. (right-wing corporate-funded thinktank) boasted that if thresholds in seed can be established in law *it will shut up the anti-GM folks "for good"!*



**EU approves plans to label all GM products.** 3.7.02

Sweeping plans for the full labelling and traceability of all GM food containing more than 0.5% material, met with disappointment from various MEPs. Some felt that people would consider unlabelled products to be GE Free in the absence of a GM Free labelling system whilst others said it was right that foods using traditional crops shouldn't be singled out as in any way special and that obliging normal food to be labelled GE free would add to the price.

EU commissioner of food safety David Byrne said more labelling would mean greater acceptability of biotechnology in food production, whilst commissioner Margot Wallstrom said traceability would address concerns and provide a robust safeguard system facilitating trade.

**Biotech Crops Allegedly Mishandled** 14.8.02

US Environmental Protection Agency EPA accused Pioneer Hi-Bred Intl. of planting GE corn too close to other crops and at an unapproved location.

Mycogen Seeds unit of Dow Agro-Sciences LLC, (see p1) has failed to plant trees around its trial plot to create a windbreak to inhibit the spread of pollen. Each company agreed to rigorous pollen containment regulations

before getting government approval to plant outdoors and now faces a maximum fine of \$11,000. Neither company's GE corn has been approved for human consumption.

The Centre for Science in the Public Interest says "These companies have been doing these experiments for years, and I have to wonder how closely they've been monitored."

**Tennessee Univ. scientists have documented marestail weed Round-up resistance to Roundup on thousands of acres of soy and cotton in the state.**

As farmers have planted more and more Roundup Ready varieties since 1996, they've been spraying more weed killer, not less, contributing to weeds developing resistance to Roundup. See [www.cropchoice.com/leadstry.asp](http://www.cropchoice.com/leadstry.asp) [www.biotechinfo.net](http://www.biotechinfo.net)

**Powerful Insecticide From GM Corn Released in Soil** 19.7.02

Researchers at New York University have shown that GE BT corn, a seed variety which is resistant to corn borer pests, releases an insecticide through its roots into the soil. The powerful toxin remains in the soil as it is not easily broken down. It retains its insecticide properties which could help to control pests, beneficial soil organisms might be killed, insects resistance promoted. Their work is the first to show that the toxin from BT corn can seep into the soil, raising fresh fears about the environmental impact of such crops. *Nature article*

**Aventis says the US food supply will never be rid of Starlink corn**

and wants the Environmental Protection Agency rules to change its "zero-tolerance" policy, and allow engineered StarLink corn into human food which at present is a violation, as it is approved only for animal feed and industrial products, eg. ethanol. 437m. bushels were found in storage, 50m bushels were grown under license in 2000, and Starlink was inadvertently mixed into another 20m. bushels. Aventis promised to improve the quality of our food, said Friends of the Earth in Washington. [www.mercola.com/2002/aug/10/gmo\\_crops.htm](http://www.mercola.com/2002/aug/10/gmo_crops.htm)

**AgResearch Illegal Application.**

The new AgResearch application GMD 02028 to insert human, goat, sheep, deer and mice genes into cattle was heard in Hamilton from August 12-15th. The three days of intense debate into this vital issue for all New Zealanders has barely made it into the media. Any transgenic experiment can proceed if approved by ERMA.

There is a lack of specific controls on gene constructs to monitor unknown risks. This high risk application has no public accountability and threatens science integrity and NZ agriculture. It also contravenes many sections of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act (HSNO).

The first day of the hearing saw a legal challenge by Jamie Fergusson, the lawyer who won the human gene in cows case (GMF98009) in 2000 that ERMA approved. The application created 3 different transgenic experiments in NZ cattle. One put an extra casein gene into the cow to produce extra milk solids, another was to remove the lactose gene to produce lactose-free milk.

The third was concerned with the insertion of the human MPB (Myelin Basic Protein) gene into the cow to study its expression effects in the milk. The 5 year study is to end in three years time.



Jamie argued the illegality of the present application. It does not meet the requirements of Sections, 5, 8, 30, 36, 40, 45 of the HSNO Act. ERMA, deferred its decision on the legal matter until the end of the hearing.

There were 863 submissions to this application, 850 were against the trials. 16 presentations at the hearing covered the dangers from Maori concerns Greenpeace, PSRG, GE-Free New Zealand (*Jon Carapiet*), Nelson GE Awareness Group and many individuals also spoke of GE and environmental degradation, horizontal gene transfer, human safety and ethics from a world, woman and animal perspective.

The illegality of the application is being vetted carefully and ERMA's decision is under threat another expensive court case which ever way it decides. Despite prescribed time lines ERMA Authority has postponed its decision until 30 September. This too, shows the ways that the HSNO Act can be manipulated.

Some of the points:

1. Agresearch has not assessed the wide-ranging effects on the environment of the transgenic trials to date, which include:  
the effect of their effluent on soil micro-organisms,  
the breakdown products of dead carcasses in the offal pits,  
the leaching of cattle urine into the water table,  
the bad health of the animals themselves and  
the health of the humans working with transgenic animals.  
Until this happens further trials should not continue.

2. The use of promoter genes (SV-40, EBV) to facilitate the process of genetic modification is being conducted without proper research into the risks that these gene fragments pose. The SV-40 promoter can easily transfer into other micro-organisms, raising the possibility of immune failures in humans and animals. SV-40 is the macaque monkey virus that is directly linked to the horizontally transferred HIV/AIDS in humans.

3. The pharmaceuticals created from the human proteins in the milk of the transgenic animals have all failed in clinical trials on human subjects. The trials have found that the body mounts an antibody reaction to the drug and the bodies natural protein causing an auto immune deficiency problem, calling into question the justification of using human genes in animals.

4. Maori ethical concerns were again not adequately addressed but an agreement to disagree has been resolved and dialogue is still on going. A few Maori were deeply angered at this and aired their feelings with great oratory.

## Famine and GE

Blair's chief scientific adviser denounced the United States' attempts to force the technology into Africa as a 'massive human experiment'. In a scathing attack on President Bush's administration, Professor David King also questioned the morality of the US's desire to flood genetically modified foods into African countries, where people are already facing starvation in the coming months. Observer, UK, 1.9.02

[www.observer.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,6903,784262,00.html](http://www.observer.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,6903,784262,00.html)

**World Food Programme brought GM maize into Zambia for seven years.** Report by Zambian radio 13.8.02 The government says it is seriously looking into how this was done without informing them as required by the international Cartagena protocol which states the recipient country needs to be notified and give explicit consent whenever GM foods are being imported into the country.

**Rejection of food aid by some southern African countries** when millions of people are at risk of starvation has fuelled debate over the role of biotechnology in alleviating hunger. In spite of chronic food shortages – Zimbabwe turned down cheap corn from the US, expressing concern that, unless the grain was milled before distribution, it could be used for planting and damage any exports to EU consumers who reject GM products. Food security specialists say that large-scale U.S. producers benefit from offloading surpluses on poor countries. (AlertNet)

Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of their World Food Program, *"Food is power. We use it to change behaviour. Some may call that bribery. We do not apologize."*

A top US official said, *"Countries facing famine in southern Africa should accept GM food or risk death for millions of its people."*

## DESIGNER BABIES

**Brave new world already here** 16/09/02

Confirmation of New Zealand's first baby developed through pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) has highlighted the fact that the genetic engineering of human babies is now in the realm of science fact, not fiction and could soon be carried out here.

Groundswell spokesperson Tremane Barr has said "There needs to be a ban placed on the genetic engineering of designer babies. Unfortunately the government ignored these calls during the development of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Amendment Bill this now allows people to apply to genetically engineer human beings."

The amendments earlier in the year to the HSNO Act includes the right for people to apply to the Minister of Health to carry out the genetic engineering of designer babies.

"This government is so pro-genetic engineering it couldn't even bring itself to ban the genetic engineering of designer babies and the potential creation of a master race." said Tremane Barr.

In an article on the Science and Politics of GM Humans for World Watch Magazine Richard Hayes stated earlier this year that it is not necessary to genetically engineer babies in order "to enable couples to avoid passing inheritable genetic diseases eg.cystic fibrosis to their children.

Those who say it is are either misinformed or seeking to mislead. Couples can have children free of the harmful genes, in most situations, designer babies only being 'necessary' if a couple wish to 'enhance' a child with other genes that neither of them carry.

"The warning signs from the first PGD baby are there and now civil society must act to change government policy and the law to fully regulate the use of PGD and ban genetically engineered **designer babies.**"

*Tremane Barr*

**Controls before release of GE animals.** 4.9.02 [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com)

The UK Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission, say new controls on GM and cloned animals, including a ban on the commercial development of GM fish, are needed to protect the environment. GE animals may breed in the wild or unanticipated behavioural changes, such as increased aggressiveness in biting insects may be caused. They suggest GM farm animals produced for human consumption are at least 10 years from the market. *"Once they get into the open sea there is no way of recalling them. fish from the US are not going to stop and show their passports before entering British waters."* Prof. Malcolm Grant, UK Agricultural/ and Environment Biotechnology Commission.

[search.ft.com/search/article.html?id=020904000512&query=genetically+modi-](http://search.ft.com/search/article.html?id=020904000512&query=genetically+modi-)

[fied&vscappId=totalSearch&state=Form](#)

## AUSTRALIAN NEWS

**Genetically modified poppies** are to be grown in Western Australia by pharmaceutical giant Glaxo Smith Kline. The aim is to increase alkaloid content. The trial of 0.2 ha, in the Kimberley region, will run next year at the Inst. of Tropical Agriculture. ABC WA Country Hour, 13.8.02

**Council moves to alleviate liability concerns** 22.7.02 Beverley Shire, east of Perth, has moved to alleviate concerns that it could be held liable if GM organisms (GMOs) spread from council controlled land to neighbouring farmland, by asking companies to sign statements indemnifying the local council from legal actions resulting from the spread of GMOs.. There are currently two companies trialling.

**Farmers could be shut out over GM:** Labor.22.7.02

Australian farmers may be locked out of European markets unless the government acts on GE crops, Labour said. Opposition primary industries spokesman Kerry O'Brien said the government was conducting a three-year study into how GM and non-GM crops could be segregated.

## BIO WARFARE

**Ebola virus could be synthesised**

New Scientist 17.7.02.P7 The technique used to create the first synthetic polio virus, revealed in July, could be used to recreate Ebola or the 1918 flu strain that killed up to 40 million people, experts said. What is even more worrying is that there are easier ways of recreating microbes. You can simply add key genes to a close relative. The key is knowing the genetic sequence, which raises questions about publishing genomes of deadly pathogens on the internet [www.newscientist.com/news/news.jsp?id=ns99992555](http://www.newscientist.com/news/news.jsp?id=ns99992555)

**Mail-Order Molecules Brew a Terrorism** 17.7.02

Orders from pharmaceutical companies, government agencies and academic scientists are filled every day. Integrated DNA Technologies in Iowa, prospering in quiet anonymity, have machines making hundreds of batches of custom-designed snippets of genetic material.

The fact that NY scientists used their mail-order molecules to make polio-viruses from scratch has prompted questions about whether strategies for preventing the proliferation of biological weapons need rethinking and if closer scrutiny is warranted. [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A15929-2002Jul16.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A15929-2002Jul16.html)

## GE DRUGS

**Patient's immune systems destroy some GE Drugs** 30.7.02

The promise of many biotech drugs is that they are the body's own solutions. Human proteins like insulin and growth hormones, the same substances that the body uses every day, are made through genetic engineering and given to people who do not make enough of the proteins on their own. But an outbreak of serious illnesses linked to the anemia drug Eprex shows that some patients do not react to GE proteins as if they were natural. The patients react as if the protein were a germ, and their immune systems try to destroy it. Eprex, is believed responsible for 141 cases of aplasia, where the body is unable to produce red blood cells, making some patients dependent on transfusions to survive. *New York Times*

**CropChoice news.** 17.9.02

Genetically modified (GM) crops have been an economic disaster in the USA and Canada according to a new report published by the Soil Association, Britain's leading organic organization. Engineered soybeans, corn and canola are estimated to have cost the US economy at least \$12 billion (£8 billion) since 1999 in farm subsidies, lower crop prices, loss of major export orders and product recalls.

Farmers are not achieving the higher profits promised by the biotechnology companies as markets for GM food collapse.

Widespread GM contamination at all levels of the food and farming industry is the major cause of these difficulties.

Seeds of doubt: experiences of North American farmers of genetically modified crops, is available from the Soil Association

Mail Order Dep.: 0117 929 0661, [mtrowell@soilassociation.org](mailto:mtrowell@soilassociation.org) or from [www.soilassociation.org/gm](http://www.soilassociation.org/gm) for a price of £12.

### Walk the talk to keep our GE Free status

Governments apparent determination to go ahead with commercial releases means that it has never been more urgent for people to get involved. No longer is it enough for us to pay our membership fees to protect New Zealand, although this newsletter would not be published without them. We have to get involved in any way we can:

- 1) Pass your newsletters on and talk to anyone. Even an aside can start them thinking.
- 2) Contact your local group or find out from us if there is one in your area. It may not be A GE Free NZ group but there are many other groups out there working on the same issue. They all need help as little or as much as you feel you can give.
- 3) Contact us and get a GE free sign for your gate/letter box.
- 4) Join the GE Free register.  
[www.gefreeregister.co.nz](http://www.gefreeregister.co.nz)
- 5) Support vigils and actions, numbers really do count. We need you!



**Nationwide Action 27<sup>th</sup> September**  
BALLOONS LIKE POLLEN IN BLOWING IN THE WIND. (see P8)

### GE FREE HAWKES BAY

Consider becoming an active GE Free campaigner. A new campaign project is starting so it is a good time to get involved. The GE Free HB group want your new ideas and enthusiasm.

**Next meeting:** Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> October, 7.30, 119 Milton Road, Napier

Agenda:

**Healthy living raffle.** We are looking at creating a large prize pool supported by holistic practitioners (mas-

sage therapists, naturopaths, homeopaths and so on) and the organic industry. Besides raising funds, the raffle will be an educational tool to promote healthy living and alternatives to GE.

**Stalls.** Distributing information on GE to the public.

Thank you to Katharine White for proceeds of the sale of GE Free artwork. Her exhibition "Renaissance" was in Creative Napier. 1-14<sup>th</sup> Sept. Odile Balas, co-coordinator. 835 0141

**WELLINGTON** now has an active MADGE group contact 387 8785

**GE AWARENESS NELSON** would love more helpers. Our Saturday market stall continues to attract concerned locals as well as visitors and our offering of sweetcorn, reapers, butterflies and scientists at the mask parade was well received, events like this help to keep the issue alive & fun

### GE FREE NORTHLAND

GE SYMPOSIUM 5.8.02, brought together Whangarei District Council, Far North District Council, Kaipara District Council and Northland Regional Council to examine the critical issues of transgenic pollution, liability, ecological and human health effects. GE FREE NORTHLAND worked hard lobbying the FNDC and other councils, to ensure the speaker list was fair, balancing anti and pro-GE groups and government agencies. Speakers for GE Free were Suzanne Hall of Living Nature, and lawyer Rick Palmer (on liability) Their concerns supported by soil scientist Dr. Neil MacGregor, Massey Univ, Hally Toia (of Northland Conservation Board), Dr. Peter Maddison (of Forest & Bird), Suzie MacIntyre (of Far North Organic Growers), Northland iwi (speakers Peter Harrison and Waitai Petera) and Kaye Baxter of Koanga Gardens.

Other speakers included Sir Paul Reeves, chair-Bioethics Council, Steve Vaughan MoE, Murray Jagger, Livestock Improvement Corp., Peter Silcock, CEO VegFed and the NZ Fruit Growers Federation, and Dr.

David Saul, Auckland University.

At one point a group of local women MADGE (Mothers Against GE) silently held up hot pink placards proclaiming "GE- WE DON'T BUY IT". Stalls by GE FREE NORTHLAND (in Food & Environment), Physicians & Scientists for Responsible Genetics, the GE FREE REGISTER and MADGE were in hot demand, many taking away piles of GE-free literature. Information was also available from the Sustainability Council of NZ. The risks of transgenic pollution were impressed upon the Mayors and attending councillors, as well as the complete lack of liability to protect innocent third parties. If anyone would like a free copy of the documents from the GE SYMPOSIUM, please ring 0 800 920 029 (Far North District Council) and ask Fiona Vessey to post you a copy including Rick Palmers paper on GE & Liability

**GE FREE NORTHLAND** followed this up with a formal request to all 3 District Council for GE to be placed on the agenda and speaking rights for concerned local groups. Local businesses are also lobbying (using our new "submission" form) to either declare the region a GE FREE ZONE or make a variation to the District Plan(s) classing GE as a Prohibited Activity.

**GE FREE NORTHLAND** has made a formal complaint to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Dr. Morgan Williams about government inaction at the contaminated GE tamarillo site Kerikeri with an emphasis on misleading and inaccurate statements made by Environment Minister Marion Hobbs. We are extremely disappointed by the manner that she and Minister of CRI's Pete Hodgson have handled legitimate community concerns about the site after RCI recommendations for more research on scientific/social impacts of GE and the decontamination of the site and justifying public concern. Zelka at [arboreus@ihug.co.nz](mailto:arboreus@ihug.co.nz), 09 432 2155.

**AUCKLAND GE-Free Coalition** is active and brings together people from many groups incl. MAD GE, GE-Free NZ, Greens, Greenpeace & FoE Events planned for e-mail: [gefrees\\_ak@yahoo.com](mailto:gefrees_ak@yahoo.com)

### **GE Free New Zealand**

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

Head Office: PO Box 693, Nelson  
Ph 03 547 9383, Fax 03 547 9329  
[info@gefree.co.nz](mailto:info@gefree.co.nz)

### **GE Free Hawke's Bay**

Odile Balas, Ph 06-835 0141  
[odile@xtra.co.nz](mailto:odile@xtra.co.nz)

### **Central Hawkes' Bay**

Warwick Mather 06 857 8080  
[mountview@paradise.net.nz](mailto:mountview@paradise.net.nz)

### **GE Aware Nelson GEAN**

Don Murray 03 529 1395  
[don.murray@internet.co.nz](mailto:don.murray@internet.co.nz)

### **Auckland GE Free NZ (Coalition)**

09 815 3370 or 09 358 4105

### **Groundswell, Christchurch**

Tremane Barr 03 981 5235  
[tremane.barr@clear.net.nz](mailto:tremane.barr@clear.net.nz)

### **GE Free Northland**

Zelka 09432 2155 or Barry  
[barry.considine@xtra.co.nz](mailto:barry.considine@xtra.co.nz)  
GE Free Northland's new website:-  
[www.gefreenorthland.org.nz](http://www.gefreenorthland.org.nz)

### **GE Free Kapiti**

Vicki McCaffrey 04 905 2526  
or Barbara Mountier  
[n.mountier@clear.net.nz](mailto:n.mountier@clear.net.nz)

### **GE Free Wellington**

Jon Muller 04 589 0536  
[jmuller@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jmuller@xtra.co.nz)

### **Central North Island**

Allan Williams 07 349 6099

### **The Sustainability Council**

July saw the Sustainability Council, launch members Sir Peter Elworthy, Dame Susan Devoy, Prof. Garth Cooper, Annabel Langheim, Sam Neill and Simon Terry support a sustainable NZ calling for a moratorium for 5 years to address scientific concerns before commercialisation. NZ is at risk since our agricultural produce make up half our exports. The government are urged to seriously reconsider lifting the morato-

rium and allow full debate of the issues in public. They need your support: [council@sustainabilitynz.org](mailto:council@sustainabilitynz.org) or visit [www.sustainabilitynz.org](http://www.sustainabilitynz.org)

### **Calendar of events**

28<sup>th</sup> September **National Balloon Release** illustrating the contamination plight and to mark the anniversary & respective countdown, on the **lifting of the moratorium**.

Happy to organise a release in their area?

Call your area coordinator or Susie on 03 546 7966 for details.

30<sup>th</sup> September **ERMA decision - AgResearch GE cows application**

1<sup>st</sup> October **New MAF protocol** on imported seed comes into force.

3<sup>rd</sup> November **GE Free NZ Annual General meeting 10-4 at the Rotunda, Lambeth Quay, Wellington.**

Contact Susie 03 546 7966  
*We hope to see you there.*

7<sup>th</sup> December **Proposed GE labelling of food takes effect.** Look out for actions to publicise around that date or phone area coordinator



**Support the EU-wide petition to Save our Seeds:**

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

**REGISTER YOUR HOME AS A GE FREE ZONE NOW** and pass the info on to all your friends and any folk in rural areas you know support the initiative. Properties registered 3,425 Residents 11,601, 285,451 acres. [www.gefreeregister.co.nz](http://www.gefreeregister.co.nz)

26 min, "HEARTBREAK IN THE HEARTLAND: The True Cost of GE Crops," frontline farmers discuss how GMOs threaten agriculture, consumer choice, and the environment. Order on-line  
[www.thecampaign.org/store.htm](http://www.thecampaign.org/store.htm)

### **Resources**

**VIDEO – ‘GM FOOD - The great debate.’** recorded at a public debate in Auckland, both sides of the the arguments about release of GM foods in New Zealand. Jon Carapiet-GE Free NZ and William Rolleston, Life Science Network. To order contact GE-free NZ Price \$20 ( incl. p&p)

**GE FREE NORTHLAND** educational info kit packs for secondary schools (available at cost).

### **Mothers against GE - MADGE**

Madge 'Pursepower' cards now available as well as great T-shirts, & umbrellas.

Contact Madge 09 309 3838 or email [madge@paradise.net.nz](mailto:madge@paradise.net.nz)

**An excellent Greenpeace GE Free food guide**, in a compact and easy to read form, will help people identify the companies to trust. Posters to advertise from Greenpeace. For your copy send a self – addressed envelope to Greenpeace, Private Bag 92507, Wellesley Street, Auckland 1 or from [www.greenpeace.org.nz/Truefood/index.html](http://www.greenpeace.org.nz/Truefood/index.html)

### **SUPPORT THE CAUSE**

**GE FREE merchandise** including bumper stickers, a4 corflutes, t-shirts etc. available at: [www.gefree.org.nz](http://www.gefree.org.nz)

A4 corflute weather resistant signs showing monarch butterfly and message **Proud to be GE Free** available cost \$2 each for order of 50 signs. Orders contact Odile 06 835 0141 See example P7 [odile@xtra.co.nz](mailto:odile@xtra.co.nz)

**T Shirts** - natural unbleached cotton with rainbow GE Free NZ logo \$20.00 incl.P&P from Head office.

**Cotton GE Free shopping bags** with logo soon available contact Head Office for more details.

### **Good websites:-**

[www.i-sis.org.uk](http://www.i-sis.org.uk)

[www.ngin.org.uk](http://www.ngin.org.uk)

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