



GE Free New Zealand In Food and Environment Newsletter August 2008

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

AGRESEARCH push ahead GE Animals application

Since our last newsletter a lot has been happening.

Crop&Food Research Ltd. application: The hearing for the GE Alliums-onion, garlic, spring onion and leeks has taken place in Christchurch. GE Free NZ gave a submission to this all-encompassing outdoor field trial where members of the onion family are intended to flower. A wide range of gene constructs including Terminator genes and GURTs (where plant processes eg. flowering are switched on by proprietary chemicals) are to be tested and specific gene sequences to be used aren't identified. This Crown Research Institute (CRI) is owned by the government and their research is paid for by our taxes.

A new application also from a CRI – AgResearch and lodged with the Environmental Risk Management Authority - ERMA is now out for public comment. The 4 part application is to genetically engineer a wide range of animals, using human and monkey cells, amongst other animal cells; and animal body parts to be used as host organisms for GE experimentation.

AgResearch aim to develop unlimited numbers of GE animals without saying which specific genes and associated genetic material they intend to use, and without going back to ERMA for further approval.

We have also seen outlined new regulations presently being developed - intended to stop GE-contamination in New Zealand. The basis for the regulations is "co-existence" of GE and GE-Free production systems with strict controls.

We believe the only option to protect GE-free producers is to ban GE releases altogether.

AGRESEARCH GE Animals with Human Genes Trials Application

AgResearch plans to trial many different GE animal types in its various laboratories and farms using genetic material from a wide range of donor species including human (synthetic) proteins. If successful trials may take place around the country. To get a full copy of the application and find out more go to www.ermanz.govt.nz

Please make a submission, due 31 October 2008 - we hope to have a sample submission on our site before the end of September.

The application is so broad it could be seen as a 'release' of GE animals, again raising the issues of ethics discussed at the Royal Commission on GM.

AgResearch are applying to genetically engineer domestic farmed animals including deer, goat, pig, cow, buffalo, horse, sheep, alpaca, llama outdoors and small animals like mice, rabbits, hamsters, rats, using human proteins and controversial vectors including HIV.

To date this cruel use of animals has not delivered a single drug to treat an illness.

Annual General Meeting

GE Free NZ AGM will be held in Wellington on September 14th at the Arts Centre 10-3. All members welcome.

ERMA do not require testing for negative effects. GE Free New Zealand loses court case.

GE Free New Zealand unfortunately lost their court case and has been saddled with costs. The Court ruled that ERMA does not require negative effects testing as a matter of course when GE trials take place in the open environment. It is up to us to request changes to the law particularly in the run up to the election.

GE Free NZ argued that under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) Act field testing must include testing for adverse effects and that ERMA's failure to require testing for adverse effects was wrong in law.

ERMA appears to read the act in a different way stating that they could not ask for adverse effects testing once the application was lodged saying they were unable to tell the applicant how to conduct their research.

GE Food Imports:

In addition to the 35 GE Foods already approved there are 6 more going through the approval process.

Food Safety Australia / New Zealand - FSANZ invites submissions on 2 variants of GE cotton in food by 9 pm 24 September 2008.

Application A614 – Food derived from Glyphosate-tolerant Cotton Line GHB614

Application A615 – Food derived from Insect-protected Cotton Line COT67B

www.foodstandards.gov.au/standards/development/documentsforpublicco868.cfm

Food Watchdog Praised for Withdrawing Contaminated Rice

GE Free NZ PR 30.7.08

The NZFSA- New Zealand's 'food watchdog' - deserves praise for testing and pulling GE-contaminated rice off shelves but must do more to encourage compliance from companies who ignore problems of GE-contamination in certain countries when sourcing their ingredients.

A range of rice products from whole rice, to rice flour noodles, rice paper, and pasta contaminated with the unapproved strain of GE Bt63 rice came from China in March 2008.

Bt is an insecticidal toxin and has known deleterious effects on the blood and organs. This rice is NOT approved in the EU, Australasia and China.

This incident adds to concerns that the integrity and safety of the whole global food supply is threatened by GE mix-ups in the lab, in distribution of seeds, through field-contamination of crops, and in post-harvest production.

The importer must be accountable and the government also needs to take action to ensure the integrity of the food system and reinstate Country of Origin labelling to stop the export and re-packaging of foods in other countries.

References: Unauthorised GM rice found and withdrawn

30/7/08: NZ Food Safety Authority
www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO0807/S00379.htm

Chinese rice products containing an unauthorised rice

UKFSA, 16.7.08
www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jul/bt63update

Emergency measures on Chinese rice products 9.4.08

An emergency measure adopted by the European Commission applied from 15/4/08, to make sure rice and rice products imported from China do not contain an unauthorised genetically modified (GM) rice known as 'Bt63'. Local authorities have been asked to liaise with businesses in their local area that may sell affected products. The Agency has issued a Food Alert for Action.

AgResearch application – a recipe for disaster. GE Free NZ PR 19.8.08

The new AgResearch application for GM animals threatens the existence of the research institute and could take New Zealand's agricultural reputation down with it. They have applied to genetically modify farm animals from almost every domesticated species that exists.

The range of animals and GM constructs is so varied that they cannot even provide an exhaustive list of the constructs being proposed, or any benefits.

AgResearch have applied to set up facilities in undisclosed secret locations for an unlimited time in Canterbury, Southland and Taranaki. These animals will be producing proteins in their milk, to be isolated for potential rare disease medicines and nutraceutical supplements. Any rare disease medicines will have to be clinically trialled. It is important to remember that the last GM medicine trial for arthritis was almost fatal because of life-threatening immune reactions in the 6 healthy patients. Three were left as amputees.

"However, there is a real risk GM nutraceuticals might escape trials due to the way they are classified," said Claire Bleakley of GE Free NZ "Genetically modified milks as medicines have already caused serious problems in clinical trials."

This latest and much larger application follows up on the work done on GM cows since 2000. But the results of this trial are poor and after 8 years there is still no data on the environmental effects or the effectiveness of the gene in milk. The GM Cows have a less than 9% live birth rate with many calves born with serious deformities. The records show that animals that live for the first two days are registered as 'still births' obscuring the fact they have been euthanised.

"These animals are suffering. There are reports of gangrenous udders, deformed calves and many suffer mastitis and are highly susceptible to respiratory and septic conditions," Ms Bleakley said.

"How can sick animals produce a healthy product? This is cost cutting taken to the extreme, it is cruelty taken to science fiction levels, and to-date recombinant milk clinical trials have failed. No milk has ever been approved for medicinal use."

New Zealand has already experienced the failure of a large GM-animal project. The disastrous GM sheep trial at Whakamaru, left 500 acres of farm land contaminated and 3000 sheep were incinerated, with remains left in offal pits and as ashes.

The sheep suffered from a range of serious diseases and had a dismal animal husbandry record with a 5% lamb rate. Human subjects in clinical trials had immune system reactions and respiratory distress. The land was then sold without any clean up or testing done on the soil.

The new AgResearch applications seek to use three types of surrogates to carry the GM embryos: GM, conventional, and recipient animals. Recipient animals will be aborted at around 60 days and the foetus cells harvested to produce new embryos.

"This practice is highly dangerous. It is possible the aborted foetus was already deformed or carrying defective traits or disabilities that could cause long term suffering to the mothers and babies."

"New Zealand cannot go down this track with the danger it poses to the environment and people. It is unbelievable that ERMA has allowed it to get this far. The Minister must 'call in' the applications now, to protect the national interest and save AgResearch from itself."

AgResearch Vision Won't Fit with Clean Green NZ

GE Free NZ PR 11.8.08

The AgResearch application is a threat to New Zealand's clean green natural image, and national identity making New Zealand into a 'GE-animal farm' - a frenzy of mad scientist dreams for transforming New Zealand into a biotechnology playground. What is needed are ethical science and commercial projects in their place.

AgResearch aims to spread GE animals around NZ

Green Party PR

AgResearch wants to genetically engineer for "outside containment" llamas, alpacas, sheep, cows, pigs, goats, buffalo, deer and horses and has refused to tell ERMA where in New Zealand its outside experiments are likely to be."

"AgResearch says it has 'developed a world leading capability in transgenic livestock research' and talks about creating 'sustainable wealth' but the fact is it wants to turn New Zealand into a giant GE laboratory to boost its own corporate plans at the expense of our long-term image, and without taking into account the huge risk of something going wrong," Ms Fitzsimons says.

"I'm sure the institute will argue about the chance of discovering a new medicine, but the application seems more about patenting new life-forms and bullying New Zealanders into accepting GE food from modified animals.

GE promoters scared of public spotlight

Green Party PR 1/8/08

NZ GE lobby group Life Sciences Network has shown its true colours by fighting against both open information and protection for non-GE growers.

Chairman Dr William Rolleston said "tough new rules" around GE crops, as part of the Greens-Government cooperation agreement, would "stop good science in its tracks.

He also stated that: "The proposed strict liability regime will destroy innovation at a time when it is needed to increase food and crop production in the face of global warming and world population increases."

"Dr Rolleston is insisting on a regime that allows GE crops to contaminate other growers' products and damage their markets, with no liability. He is saying genetic engineers cannot innovate if they have to take responsibility for any harm they cause to others." says Greens Co-Leader Jeanette Fitzsimons.

New GE Rules Threaten Kiwi Brand GE Free NZ

PR 31.7.08

New Zealand's international image will be seriously damaged if the government adopts new regulations intended to stop GE-contamination in New Zealand. It won't work.

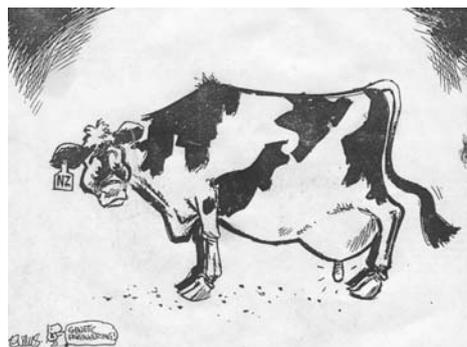
The basis for the regulations is "co-existence" of GE and GE-Free production systems with strict controls. But that is not possible for New Zealand, and the only option to protect GE-free producers is to ban GE releases.

"It is time to stop trying to have both options. New Zealand cannot release GE crops, and we cannot genetically engineer food without damaging what consumers value most about Brand New Zealand- our clean green image."

The Royal Commission on Genetic Modification proposed 'keeping options open'. It is now possible to find the middle path and have both options: the ethical use of genetic science for innovation, as well as GE-free milk, fruit & vegetables. Zespri's GE-free innovations give the best of both options with proven benefits.

National as well as Labour must recognise the need for a National Science Strategy ensuring applications of gene science such as Gene-Marker assisted breeding fit with our National image. We must use gene science intelligently and ethically.

The government needs to go further and ban commercial GE crops. Only this will be sure to stop contamination of consumers' perceptions of New Zealand.



Greens tighten GE safeguards

Green Party PR

The Green Party has negotiated new safeguards to protect against GE - part of its co-operation agreement with the Government. Ms Fitzsimons says. "If at some future date National and Labour use their powers to try to force NZ to accept general release of GE crops, there'll be more rights and information for neighbours and for those who question GE."

The Government Co-operation Agreement with the Green Party states, "During this term of Parliament work will be undertaken to increase the certainty around the ability of non-GM producers to maintain GM free production and be able to identify their products as such to meet market access requirements".

The principal new GE regime if adopted:

1. An open public register of the location and identity of any GE crops allowed to be grown, excluding contained field trials.

2. A second open public register - on the compliance record of all field tests, and any releases, with details of reasons for any non-compliance and official actions taken.

3. A system of segregation to ensure GE material will not contaminate any non-GE crop. This is an important provision not only for management in the field but, as has been seen in New Zealand with cases of contaminated corn crops, for keeping seed stocks GE-free.

4. A "traceability" system from the point of production to the shop shelf based on the European Union model. The way the EU model could be applied to NZ's regulatory system will not be known until the end of August, but the EU includes a labelling scheme.

5. An agreement that the question of liability and payment for harm resulting from the use of GE organisms will be considered again by Cabinet, after the next stage of relevant international negotiations on GE are completed at Cartagena.

The full Cabinet decision will appear on the Cabinet website shortly.

The ERMA hearing on GM Onion, Spring Onion, Garlic & Leek Field Test Application

Chch 12.8.08
Crop and Food Research aims to field test GM Onion, Spring Onion, Garlic & Leek over a 10-year period, planting all four species over 2.5 hectares.

MAF Rules Forcing Risky GE Experiments Outdoors.

GE Free NZ 13.8.08

ERMA, the Environmental Risk Management Authority has been told that MAF rules mean GM plants must be put into the field to test their impact on soil, because MAF don't allow the same research to be done in containment.

At a formal hearing on the Crop and Food Institute application for field-trials of GE onions, garlic and leek, the lead scientist Tony Conner told ERMA that current MAF plant containment rules (glasshouse facilities) only allow the growing of GM plants in sterilised soil and constrained in pots.

These regulations mean basic research can't be conducted in containment and contentious GE research is being forced outside into open fields.

We are surprised that MAF rules force GE research into open fields when better and lower-risk alternatives could easily be made possible. GE crop field-trials present a serious risk of contamination of the environment.

The Authority (ERMA) has been asked to consider the option of a simple rule-change to provide conditions that allow the use of real soil medium in glasshouses as an alternative to the proposed GE field experiments. The Minister for the Environment Trevor Mallard will also be asked to take action to make contained ethical GE research feasible.

Contained applications of ethical gene technology is the ideal middle path that will serve the National interest. It can provide gene science with research facilities that do not risk contamination of land, other crops or destruction of the clean, green, natural image underpinning New Zealand's economy.

Public Losing Faith in ERMA Process

GE Free NZ PR 8/06/08
Public confidence in GE regulation is waning, this should be a wake-up call

to ERMA & government that they must live up to the promises made following the Royal Commission on GM. Submissions fall on deaf ears, and concerns are totally ignored." 123 public submissions were received. The GE Alliums (leek, garlic, onion & spring onion) will be allowed to flower outdoors in cages. 90% opposed the way field trials are to be conducted.

The insect pollinators will be killed after pollinating the plants. "This is a significant risk as pollen grains are microscopic and with one small mistake thousands could escape into the surrounding area. The earlier onion trial started in 2004, annual results showing that the onions performed poorly and bulbs became infested with a soft rot when stored. There was also controversy as seed was imported for 3 years from US collaborators Monsanto / Seminis. The illegality of this was raised with ERMA and the permit then quietly amended in November 2007.

Every GE application open for public comment has been approved to date and information presented by both public and expert scientists ignored.

Officials out of touch with New Zealanders – Green Party PR 30.7.08

Officials are backing this proposal to saying it would "enhance" NZ's reputation. ERMA project team considers, "the benefits to be derived from the proposed field test would be; enhancing New Zealand's ability to preserve options and maintain choices, increased scientific knowledge including knowledge about environmental impacts, agronomic performance and impact... and enhanced reputation of New Zealand agricultural research". The Government doesn't care whether we are GE-free or not "Rather than 'preserving options and maintaining choices' we are heading down a route that will seriously restrict the choices of growers who wish to satisfy their markets that their products are totally GE-free, and eventually deny choice to New Zealand consumers who want certainty their food is uncontaminated.

NZ Delegates Fight African's over GM Tree Regulation

GE Free NZ PR 27/05/2008
New Zealand's delegation at the UN

Convention on Biological Diversity, (COP/MOP4, Bonn from 12th -31 May) opposed African and European nations remit for a precautionary approach to GM trees; signalling it would vote with Australia and Canada, opposing African nations' calls to suspend the release of GE trees until there is sufficient understanding on the risks they pose. This undermines a precautionary approach and blocks GE regulation demanded by developing nations.

The NZ delegation went against public sentiment, showing our government again supporting a failing genetic technology and unwanted genetic pollution that will affect forests, insects and starve our birds.

Background-In 2003 NZ Forestry Instnow Scion applied to ERMA to grow GE herbicide resistant Pines and Norway Spruce both with altered reproductive development. Two lines utilised Barstar/barnase genes which contravenes the world voluntary moratorium on Terminator technology.

SCION WITHDRAWS FROM GE TREE TRIAL

GE trees have been removed 4 years into their 22 year trial with environmental and ecosystem impacts research over only 3 years. In May Scion notified ERMA that it was ceasing its field trial, MAF biosecurity confirm the trial will be carried on indoors under an original approval.

Scion claim the trials were a success but no evidence of this success has been released despite requests from GE Free NZ. MAF will be monitoring the site for 2 years after the removal of the trees.

GE Free NZ concerns about facility inspection were backed up in the MAF report on the Scion GE Tree biosecurity breach, after controls at the GE tree facility were breached by rabbit warrens that eventually destroyed the trial of spruce. In January 2008 a breach saw 19 trees cut down, 17 of which carried a gene involved in reproductive development, and a GE Free sign left.

Neither of these approaches has much to do with biotech..

And although biotech has addressed a few orphan diseases, produced new therapies in infectious disease, cancer and autoimmune disorders, and recombinant versions of biologics for diabetes and growth disorders, it hasn't delivered on the promised 'cures' of genetic therapies or even the wide adoption of molecularly targeted medicine. Certainly, it hasn't done much to address disease and malnutrition among the world's poor.

This journal champions biotech research, so we are not downbeat on its prospects to, one day, generate products that will heal, fuel and feed the world. That is, nevertheless, an outrageous act of faith bordering on the religious.

Consumer & Farmer Victory !!! Monsanto Finally Forced to Dump RBGH

Monsanto announced on August 6 it will "divest" or sell its controversial GE animal drug, recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH) a direct result of 14 years of determined opposition by organic consumer, public interest, and family farmer groups.

Organic Consumers Association has campaigned against this cruel and dangerous drug, pointing out to organic and health-minded consumers that rBGH-tainted dairy products pose unacceptable dangers to humans from increased antibiotic residues and elevated levels of a potent cancer tumor promoter called IGF-1. OCA's

"Millions Against Monsanto" generated over a quarter million emails and petition signatures, helping make rBGH one of the most controversial food products in the world.

www.organicconsumers.org/rbghlink.cfm

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



**Monsanto - too cosy with the
Food & Drugs Administration**

PAN PHARMACEUTICALS wins \$50 million damages from government

The NSW Supreme Court found the TGA acted illegally in its class 1 recall of about 1,500 Pan Pharmaceuticals supplements. Pan had received a complaint about their drug Travacalm causing minor discomfort and had already voluntarily recalled the product. However, the TGA immediately forced Pan to shut down and within a few days instigated a class 1 recall. See-
www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24183640-23289,00.html

Australian News

The Western Australian Government has just announced a four-year extension of its state ban on GM crops and has called for tighter labelling laws.

But a decision by two states to go ahead and grow and harvest GM canola harms Australia's reputation as a food producer, and goes against the wishes of leaders in the food industry like Goodman Fielder and fails to protect the integrity of Australia's food system.

GM-free canola commands a premium in the market. Growing GM-canola is an economic threat, not least because of consumer demand for GM-free, safe clean food.

The decision to break a moratorium on GM food crops comes at a cost to

Australia as a nation and a brand, and only serves the interests of specific sectors.

When harvested in October the canola oil will find its way into a huge range of common products. We as consumers are denied a choice as there are no comprehensive requirements for GM products to be labelled in Australia (or New Zealand)..

UK- Why Prince Charles is Right

ISIS PR 20/8/08

We Need GMO-Free Food and Agriculture for Food Security by Dr. Vandana Shiva/ Dr. Mae-Wan Ho

www.isis.org.uk/princeCharlesGMfood.php

Counteracting biotech industry's false claims- Prince Charles has cautioned the world on the blind, headlong rush to spread GM seeds and crops worldwide, especially in the Third World.

It has become necessary because the biotechnology industry is using the current food and fuel crisis to push GM crops on grounds that they will increase yields.

The current crisis is a result of speculation and diversion of food crops to biofuels. Genetic engineering so far has only achieved the transfer of single gene traits such as herbicide resistance and Bt-toxin production.

There is no GM crop currently engineered for high yields or that produces higher yields. Quite the opposite is the case. GM crops have been a disastrous failure on all counts.

GM crops bring less income, less yield, more pesticides, more pests, and superweeds and are far from safe.



Excerpts from meeting of Inter-Council Working Party on GE 4.7.08

(all councils North of and including Auckland regional council)

(b) That the Working Party request, in the process of the current reviews of Regional Policy Statements, that the ARC and NRC insert provisions into the respective Regional Policy Statements to the effect of prohibiting the field trialling or release of GMOs in the Northland and Auckland regions until such time that outstanding issues such as liability, economic costs and benefits, environmental risks, and cultural/community concerns are resolved.

(d) That each political party represented in Parliament be sent the same set of questions that were sent by the Working Party to the Government in December 2006. That the Labour Government be re-sent the same set of questions to determine whether its stance has changed and to enable a valid current comparison between all political parties. That a request be made to have each party's response before the 2008 elections.

For full minutes contact Kerry Grundy at: kerryg@wdc.govt.nz

REGISTER YOUR HOME AS A GE FREE ZONE

Support the initiative. Properties registered - 5795 properties listed in the GE Free Register covering a total of 362,422.99 acres.

www.gefreeregister.org.nz

GE FREE NZ APPEAL FOR DONATIONS

To help us keep going please send any donations to GE Free NZ, PO Box 39158, Wellington.

Since losing the court case we have received several donations.

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who has contributed to our costs.

NEW TRUE-FOOD GUIDE from GREENPEACE

The 6th edition of the guide allows Kiwi consumers the chance to check the food they're eating doesn't contain GE. Despite the fact that there are no commercial GE crops in NZ, GE ingredients can still find their way into our food chain through processed food.

Download your own copy at:
www.gefreefood.org.nz/downloads/GreenpeaceGEFreeFoodGuide08.pdf

You can also give your favourite cafe or takeaway a copy, lobbying them to support GE free The Green "GE FREE section" continues to grow, reflecting a strong ongoing non-GE position from NZ food companies and unprecedented anti-GE stance from Australasia's largest food company Goodman Fielder.

This is the first time a major industry player has stepped so publicly into the wider GE debate. Australia is the biggest source of NZ's canola and other processed foods that we consume, so the the company's stance directly impacts on us.

NZ Food Authorities have approved some thirty GE products for importation and use in food. Food Authorities do no tracking or independent testing, People with allergies, pregnant women, very young and elderly persons may be most at risk.

Vote GE FREE with your dollar. Support companies with GE FREE Policies and Identity Preservation (IP) systems in place to ensure that their products continue to be GE free.

We need to encourage them to include a statement or logo on the packaging so that people know which companies have a GE-free policy.

A new website has been set up to help companies and consumers:

www.gefreereepolicy.com

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

"The Future of Food"

Videos are 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.

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

Dear Member,

2008 is an election year and we need to ask questions of both parties.

National have made it clear that if they get into government GE technology will be a major part of our agricultural research whereas Labour have adopted the softly softly approach quietly supporting GE research in government owned institutions whilst hoping the public don't notice.

We must keep asking the politicians the hard questions making it clear we don't believe GE will save the world and providing evidence.

Please write a submission to ERMA against the application from AgResearch for animals with human genes and encourage as many people as possible to oppose this trial by 31st October. We must continue to slow the pace of GE use in our environment and protect food security.

Thank you, The Newsletter Team, GE Free NZ.

There is much important work to be done. We rely on your support. Please join yourself or ask a friend to join us by passing them this subscription form.

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GE Free New Zealand

In Food And Environment (RAGE) Inc.

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www.gefree.org.nz

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Please choose membership: Single membership: \$25.00 Family membership: \$35.00

I wish to make a donation of \$ _____

I would like to help with: community education office work take part in rallies fundraising
 GE Free communities promotion local groups

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Your support is greatly appreciated.**