



# GE Free New Zealand

## In Food and Environment

### Newsletter Summer 2005

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

#### Terminator ...call to action

##### NZ Govt Backs Terminator!!!

11/02/05 After being swamped by protest emails and letters, the Canadian government was forced to soften its public position on Terminator at a United Nations meeting in Bangkok. Canada's aim to reinstate trials and use of Terminator genes by overturning a worldwide ban on GE Terminator Technologies (GURTS) **was backed only by the Governments of New Zealand & Australia.**

GURTs caused international alarm because of the dire implications it has for food security and sustainable farming. Some GURTS even require a proprietary chemical to be applied before seeds start growing at all, fuelling fears of the impact of GURT's on the environment due to increased chemical use.

Terminator technology inserts a gene sequence that renders seeds sterile, (the pollen remains viable and can infect other crops) thus forcing farmers to buy seeds each year and ending the right of farmers to save their seeds. Recently Iraqi farmers were banned from saving seeds under directive 81 from US administration there.

GE Free NZ asked our government to support the international community and block moves by the Canadian government to authorise Terminator seeds, but they supported Canada in a betrayal of New Zealand national interest and the NZ public will.

International consensus states terminator technology is a threat to basic human rights and the food supply. Biotech companies agreed not to commercialise it, so recent moves to

authorise Terminator are not only a direct attack on thousands of years of

agriculture that formed the basis of human civilization, but also threatens the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people around the world as well as the environment and human health.

The biotech industry appears incapable of controlling its products, and by failing to stop GE contamination threaten world food security. "This is a wake-up call for New Zealand farmers and the public at large: companies are setting their sites on our food supply in ways that will be detrimental to the Public Good." says Jon Carapiet. The NZ government has repeatedly backed the US at the WTO forcing GE foods on other countries and limiting regulatory control. Government must back NZ farmers and the public against the threat to legitimise Terminator.

Marian Hobbs is wrong to promote Terminator as a bio-containment technique, as the technique creates sterile seeds but viable pollen, which can contaminate other crops, making their seed sterile. It was developed to ensure farmers buy new seeds each year.

**Write to the following MPs at Freepost, Parliament. Wellington or Email:**

Helen Clark  
[pm@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:pm@ministers.govt.nz)  
Jim Sutton  
[jsutton@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:jsutton@ministers.govt.nz)  
MarianHobbs  
[mhobbs@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:mhobbs@ministers.govt.nz)  
Pete Hodgson  
[phodgson@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:phodgson@ministers.govt.nz)  
Jim Anderton  
[janderton@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:janderton@ministers.govt.nz)

**Minister Misleading Public Over Terminator Trials.** 16/02/05  
GE Free NZ in food and Environment

believe Marian Hobbs is deliberately misleading the public about New Zealand's backing for Terminator genes, and may be covering up the fact that similar technology is already being trialled in the field in this country.

The Minister has been asked to support an international moratorium on development of Terminator seeds until the fundamental societal issues have been scrutinised by the world community and has refused. She has not been honest about the fact that ERMA appear to have approved GE pine tree trials of a different "GURT" (Genetic Use Restriction Technique) at Rotorua understood to include some with the "barnase" gene construct - another approach to genetic control.

Firstly the Minister misled the media by implying she is being unreasonably asked to support a "ban" rather than a moratorium on Terminator seeds. Her press statement says "Marian Hobbs rejected a call to (support a) ban on field tests for terminator genes raised in the report" and in a personal response to messages, states: "It is important to note that countries are not presently being asked to vote on banning or otherwise of the use of GURTs".

The Minister's main advisors failed to correct a misleading impression of avoiding the question about a worldwide moratorium on Terminator. Talking generalisations about GURTS, not specifically about Terminator seeds, Hobbs dodges the ethical question facing the international community. "Our government must keep faith with the public and the world by promising GE Terminator in food is not next on the agenda."

## "Buyer Beware" Action needed over Misleading GE Labels

Some years ago government reassured the public that we would be allowed the choice to avoid GE/GM foods through a clear labelling system. So I was shocked to find the first GE products appearing on supermarket shelves, under the new rules, and angered that I was nearly conned into buying it.

What appeared to be tasty, low-fat Chilli Beans perfect for vegetarians was not at all my taste in food. It was already in my shopping basket when by chance I spotted "corn: genetically modified" in tiny print in the ingredient panel. But 'chance' it seems is good enough for New Zealand consumers as far as the Grocery industry and the authorities are concerned.

The manufacturer and the owners of my local supermarket- Progressive Enterprises, say the labelling meets the letter of the law, believe if people are misled into buying a product because they miss the GE label then it's their own fault. Unfortunately the Commerce Commission agrees. It says that even if people are misled it is powerless to prosecute or require clearer labelling because the rules are set under "Food Standards" and can only be changed by our politicians. Once again industry and the authorities are busy passing the buck leaving the consumer playing piggy in the middle.

The choice to avoid GE foods is not just an issue of food safety but of cultural, ethical and environmental values. People deceived into eating such products may be justified in feeling a stomach-churning sense of betrayal at this sham labelling system.

This may be the first of many foods that will appear unless supermarkets keep faith with their customers and take it off the shelves. Until the Minister of Consumer Affairs takes action for new laws requiring clear and honest labelling- 'buyer beware'.

With plenty of exemptions under the law - including no labelling at takeaways and cafes or on refined oils, if the law says label it at supermarkets, surely it should be clearer than this?

## Take Action over misleading GE Labels

Stagg Chilli Bean- Vegetable Mix- targeted at vegetarians- is one of the first GE products to be 'labelled' as the law requires, but in small print on the ingredients list rather than the clearer labels previously promised.

Please check out the label yourself, if you agree it is unsatisfactory complain to the Commerce Commission, the manufacturer, supermarket companies, Food Authorities & Judith Tizzard MP. See label

**Hormel says it has now received over 1000 emails, and is thinking about withdrawing the product.**

Convince them to remove it. Contact:

Hormel (Manufacturer) 09 379 5350

[smartin@hormelfoods.com.au](mailto:smartin@hormelfoods.com.au)

Foodtown/Woolworths

[Angela.Deehan@progressive.co.nz](mailto:Angela.Deehan@progressive.co.nz)

0800 40 40 40 09 275 2788

Pak n Save / New World

Auckland: 09 621 0600

Wellington: 04 527 2510

South Island: 03 353 8700

[melissa@foodstuffsnz.co.nz](mailto:melissa@foodstuffsnz.co.nz)

Commerce Commission

0800 943 600 (Fair Trading

complaints) PO Box 2351 Wellington

[Sarah.Boggs@comcom.govt.nz](mailto:Sarah.Boggs@comcom.govt.nz)

Food Safety Authority

0800 693 721 or 04 473 9942

[carole.inkster@nzfsa.govt.nz](mailto:carole.inkster@nzfsa.govt.nz)

Judith Tizzard, Minister of Consumer Affairs, Parliament Buildings

Wellington ( Free post)

[Judith.Tizzard@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Judith.Tizzard@parliament.govt.nz)

Food Standards Australia New

Zealand 04 473 9942

[info@foodstandards.govt.nz](mailto:info@foodstandards.govt.nz)

### Things to mention

- Scientists and doctors warn that current testing methods for GE food safety are inadequate to protect the public. They warn that GE foods shouldn't be on the shop shelves as some people are more vulnerable to negative effects including the elderly, pregnant women and those with suppressed immunity

- Even if a label is " legal" it is still possible that it is likely to deceive. In this case- just take a look and ask other

people: its deceptive and demands action

- This is a consumer rights and human rights issue as well as one of cultural values, ethics, and safety to health and the environment.

- There is a higher incidence of people wanting to be clearly told if a product is GE or not than needing to be warned about peanut allergens or on-pack messages such as "see the taste"

- Supermarkets may be exposed to liability for emotional or physical damage if someone eats this product unknowingly and unwillingly. The Australian Insurance Council has warned manufacturers using GE may be held liable through "asbestos-style" lawsuits in decades ahead.

- Supermarkets need to keep faith with their customers. Even if the label is "legal" retailers should not stock this product or should properly inform its customers using a shelf sticker or visible sign.

Giant experiment aims to compile a photo file of products with labels identifying that they contain GE ingredients. If you have seen others, snap a photo of the label and email it to: [webmaster@90degrees.net.nz](mailto:webmaster@90degrees.net.nz)

### GE cotton for use in NZ foods

10/02/05 The trans-Tasman food standards authority says it is safe to eat foods containing ingredients made from some GE cotton. Food Standards Australia New Zealand FSANZ seeks **public submissions, by March 23**, on the use in foods of GE cotton from Monsanto cotton engineered to tolerate glyphosate herbicides, such as the company's Roundup.

Last year, FSANZ approved a 20th GE food ingredient, oil and "linters" from cotton, COT102-Bollgard II, engineered with gene codes to produce a bacterial toxin, Bt, to kill insects.

Foods containing oil and lintens from the GE cotton are exempt from GE labelling requirements. Lintens, the fine, silky fibres are used in food casings, and ice cream.

Another GE cotton, MXB-13, has been reviewed which has been engineered to be both herbicide tolerant and insect-resistant.

[www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3183785a11,00.html](http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3183785a11,00.html) See also Page 4

## **Xenotransplantation and BioEthics Get involved in the debate about the use of animal organs and tissues for medical purposes.**

The Bioethics Council, Toi te Taiao, is about to discuss xenotransplantation with the public. They want to hear what you think on these issues.

### **Xenotransplantation involves using animal (eg.pigs) cells, organs and tissues into humans.**

They suggest it may help people on long waiting lists for human organs, or those who have diseases eg. diabetes.

The treatment not only raises ethical, spiritual and cultural issues, but also public health issues. Restrictions on xenotransplantation here end this year. The Ministry of Health intends to look at safety issues before new rules are made. A discussion document released last year recommended prohibiting xenotransplantation, until more work has been done on its safety and public acceptability.

[www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/wpindex/-human+tissue+consultation](http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/wpindex/-human+tissue+consultation)

To be involved in this discussion go to [www.bioethics.org.nz/about-bioethics/issues-in-focus/xenotransplantation/index.html](http://www.bioethics.org.nz/about-bioethics/issues-in-focus/xenotransplantation/index.html)

For a discussion document see [www.bioethics.org.nz/publications/xenotransplantation-jan05/index.html](http://www.bioethics.org.nz/publications/xenotransplantation-jan05/index.html)

or write to Toi te Taiao: Bioethics Council, PO Box 10362 Wellington. Ph.(04) 916-7673 Fax: (04) 917-7523 [john.pennington@bioethics.org.nz](mailto:john.pennington@bioethics.org.nz)

Dialogue events will take place in Auckland (meeting + separate hui), Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch (meeting combined with hui), Dunedin. Dates and venues to be advised on website.

### **Q&A - Xenotransplantation**

#### ***Does it involve GE?***

Human bodies reject foreign tissue. To prevent this, donor animals are genetically engineered to make their organs more like human organs to fool the recipient's immune system.

#### ***Are there risks?***

Animal organs carry retroviruses, which can transfer disease from animals to humans.

Human bodies may still reject the organs.

#### ***What ethical issues does it raise?***

Do we have the right to take body parts from animals? The ethical issues of mixing animal and humans - is there a point at which a human becomes less human? How do you weigh the risks of creating new diseases against the hope of medical advances.

#### ***What are the animal welfare issues involved?***

Does it cause unnecessary suffering to the animals involved?

#### ***Have there been any successes?***

Around 200 people have received transplanted animal tissue, including a few New Zealanders in the late 1990's. Animal-human transplants are already being trialled or planned in the US and 8 European countries. Australia has banned animal-human transplants for 5 years. Canada has a similar ban. See: [www.nzherald.co.nz/index.cfm?ObjectID=10008863](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/index.cfm?ObjectID=10008863)



#### **Dolly's Creator Granted Human Cloning Licence.** Reuters. 09/02/05

The scientist who created the world's first cloned sheep, was granted a licence to clone human embryos for medical research. Professor Ian Wilmut, Roslin Institute, Edinburgh, plans to obtain stem cells for research into Motor Neurone Disease (MND)

#### **Pig organ transplants dangerous and costly** *Damning report on xenotransplantation buried by government officials* Observer. 29/01/03 [www.i-sis.org.uk/POTDC.php](http://www.i-sis.org.uk/POTDC.php)

The Department of Health commissioned a report to explore the legal and ethical implication of xenotransplantation, and to help formulate a strategy for proceeding with the contentious technology.

The independent advisers from the University of Glasgow warned that xenotransplantation might have to be abandoned in favour of other alternatives, arguing that the

Government ignored ethical and public concerns over the technology, and using it on patients could prove so dangerous the Government could face multi-million pound compensation claims.

Leaked to *The Observer*, June 2003, it warned that the NHS and companies involved would be liable for a huge lawsuit if new, potentially lethal viruses emerged from the practice of putting pig cells and organs into the human body. And if the disease - which some experts have warned could create a new HIV-type virus - spreads across the world, the Government could be sued for breaching international law.

Patients would also have to choose between death and agreeing to lifelong monitoring, and not to have children or unprotected sex, in case any disease could be passed on to another generation. To help facilitate the acceptance of xeno-transplantation, the Government commissioned 3 reports.

The authors of the final, most controversial document got a letter from a senior government official explaining it had decided not to publish their work. It claimed the findings did not meet the needs of the UK Xenotransplantation Interim Regulatory Authority (UKXIRA), which offers expert guidance to the Government, and "lacked balance in some areas".

The report's suppression outraged animal welfare groups, which express deep unease about the ethics of creating 'organ farms'. But it is the legal implications arising from the creation of new disease that appears likely to prove most damaging to the future of xeno-transplantation. Many experts have voiced concerns that putting pig cells and organs into the human body could create new viruses.

The pig genome contains many porcine endogenous retroviruses that while dormant in the pig, could prove infectious for human beings. ISIS report 2000, Xenotransplantation - how bad science and big business put the world at risk from viral pandemics conclusions and warnings have been confirmed. See [www.i-sis.org.uk](http://www.i-sis.org.uk)

**Stopping GE trees in Rotorua**  
**30/01/05 PMEA press release**  
[www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/PO0501/S00217.htm](http://www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/PO0501/S00217.htm)

Four people were arrested while attempting to decontaminate the field trial of GM trees, all in the Forest Research Inst, Rotorua. People from around NZ gathered at the site of FRI's GE pine tree trials in Rotorua demanding an end to the trial.

"The public has a right to know where these trees are and how close they are to their homes and families," said Ana Navidad, spokesperson for GE Free Rotorua. The experiment includes the use of antibiotic resistant marker genes and viral promoters which is a risk to the health of all new Zealanders," said Felicity Perry, spokesperson, Peoples Moratorium Enforcement Agency.

"As noted by the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification in their 2001 report: 'the use of sterility technology in commercial forestry trees should be investigated, as it has the potential to reduce pollen production with its associated allergenicity problems and prevent wild pine escape. However, a full assessment, based on field trials, of the effects of genetically modified sterility on the ecology of the forest would be required.'

"There are no plants produced using seed sterilisation technologies in commercial use anywhere and speculation about their possible impact is premature."

**The Greens, GE and this year's election** Jeanette Fitzsimons, Green Party co-leader

The GE-Free movement in New Zealand has been successful in ensuring GE remains in the laboratory (or at worst in field tests) for the immediate future. The last six years of campaigning has created a regulatory environment and an awareness that, at present, is deterring applications for the release of GE into the environment.

Since the GE Moratorium was lifted in October 2003, there have been no applications for the commercial release of genetically engineered organisms. There is no immediate prospect of an

application for approval coming before the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA).

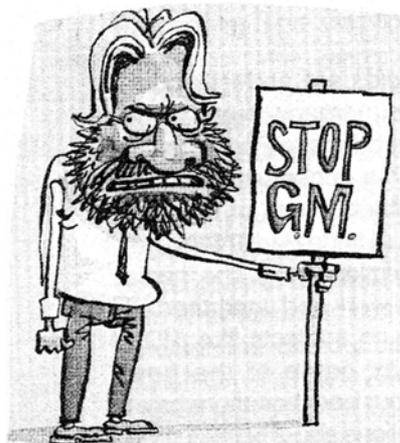
However the Greens and the rest of the GE-Free movement remain vigilant and will oppose any such application should it occur.

Meanwhile, Ian Ewen-Street's members' bill, calling for the reinstatement of the GE Moratorium, will give Parliament an opportunity to acknowledge the massive international consumer resistance to GE and to consider the mounting evidence against the technology.

**Coalition could lift ban on GM crops** The West Australian, Cathy Bolt 28/01/05

[www.thewest.com.au/20050128/news/general/tw-news-general-home-sto130338.html](http://www.thewest.com.au/20050128/news/general/tw-news-general-home-sto130338.html)

West Australian Liberal and National parties hint they may lift the state's moratorium on GE crops if elected.



**Australia Adopts GM Cotton but is it Wise? The moratorium on GM canola holds but Bt cotton slips through.** [www.i-sis.org.uk](http://www.i-sis.org.uk) .Isis PR 03/02/05 Sam Burcher

Monsanto's single and double gene cotton Bt ( bacillus thuringiensis ), is genetically modified to produce proteins to kill off pests and has been grown in Australia since 1996. Applications have been granted to expand GM cotton production to parts of the country where it was previously prohibited because of concerns of cross-contamination with native cotton species. Monsanto claims that the current 30% cap on GM cotton could be lifted to as much as 80% of total acreage in 2004/5.

Industry claims that the northern Australian cotton may not need any

chemical sprays, this is refuted by extensive experience that shows supplemental insecticides such as organophosphates have been used to control Bt resistant Helicoverpa caterpillar larvae.

GM cotton fails to improve yields and decreases profits. Yields remain constant at 7- 8 tonnes /ha, average operating profits fell from around \$155 in 1995 to \$60 in 2001 . The price for cotton plummeted by almost 40% during the same period. A further \$155/ha "technology fee" has to be paid to Monsanto.

Monsanto has aggressively pushed GM cotton worldwide and it is sown on 7.5 million hectares of Bt resistant and Bt/ herbicide tolerant cotton across the world, but GM crops are still only 1.3% of global agriculture area.

Fusarium is now spreading quickly through Australia's non-fusarium resistant GM cotton areas, according to the New South Wales Agriculture Department. Roundup disturbs the soil food web so fusarium proliferates while beneficial microbes are lost.

GM cotton in household products Cottonseeds are crushed and the resulting oil ends up as unlabelled "vegetable oil". In particular, it is often used in deep fat fryers for fish and chips and other fast foods restaurants, explains Dr Judy Carmen, director of the Institute of Health and Environmental Research. The linters (short filled fibres attached to the cottonseeds) from GM cotton find their way into household products as diverse as ice cream, sausage skins and toothpaste . Lint is also used in medical supplies such as bandages and wound dressings as well as in tampons and clothing.

Oil and linters made from GM cotton are not labelled in food in Australia as they are deemed to contain no DNA or protein, a presumption not based on empirical data.

**Make a submission to stop**  
Application A553 Monsanto GE cotton in food by 23<sup>rd</sup> March send to:  
[SLO@foodstandards.gov.au](mailto:SLO@foodstandards.gov.au)  
[www.foodstandards.gov.au/standardsdevelopment](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/standardsdevelopment)

**European GE food**

Greenpeace International says the consumer boycott of GE food in Europe has been highly successful, crediting tough European labelling laws, which came into effect in April 2004, for helping to keep GE food out.

Their EU Markets report search of supermarket shelves in Europe has found very few GE labelled products, in a handful of countries, often soy or corn oil. **Oils are exempt from labelling in New Zealand.**

[www.greenpeace.org/international\\_en/multimedia/download/1/724658/0/mkt\\_new.pdf](http://www.greenpeace.org/international_en/multimedia/download/1/724658/0/mkt_new.pdf)

**Monsanto buys big into seeds**

Monsanto has bought leading seed company Seminis, "the largest developer, grower and marketer of fruit and vegetable seeds in the world". In the long-term, they will be looking for GE opportunities.

The \$1.4 billion deal gives Monsanto weight in Europe and Asia, where Seminis does a lot of its business.

The company supplies more than 3,500 seed varieties to commercial fruit and vegetable growers in 150 countries, including New Zealand.

Guardian: "Monsanto has GM crop plans for seed firm"

[www.guardian.co.uk/business/story/0,1397765,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/story/0,1397765,00.html)

**Monsanto pays \$1billion for fruit & veg seed company - no plans for GM**

[www.nongmfarmers.com/news\\_details.asp?ID=1970](http://www.nongmfarmers.com/news_details.asp?ID=1970) 26/01/05

**Monsanto now owns 91% of seeds worldwide.**

**Outcry over creation of smallpox virus** Independent 22/01/05

Senior scientific advisers to the World Health Organisation recommended the creation of a GE version of smallpox virus to counter any threats of bio-terrorist attacks. Permitting researchers to engineer genes of one of the most dangerous infections known would make it easier to develop new drugs against smallpox, they said.

The scientist who led the global campaign to eradicate smallpox opposed the move citing risk to public health and the accidental production of a more lethal virus.

[www.Geinfo.org.nz/022005/01.html](http://www.Geinfo.org.nz/022005/01.html)

**Seeds of Indonesia bribery scandal**

The Department of Justice and Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC) charged Monsanto with bribing Indonesian government official to waive a strict environmental requirement needed to plant controversial GE cotton seeds there. US authorities found Monsanto had paid US\$ 700,000 in bribes to 140 officials and family members from 1997-2002. In 2000 an agreement to plant 20,000 Ha of GE cotton was postponed, 5 months later approval for an experimental project in Sulawesi was given. Only days later 40 tons of GE seed from S.Africa was driven under armed guard in trucks marked 'rice delivery'.

[www.Geinfo.org.nz/022005/02.html](http://www.Geinfo.org.nz/022005/02.html)

**Investors challenge Monsanto over GE risks.**20/01/05

A coalition of 300 religious institutional and socially responsible investors and firms filed a resolution asking Monsanto to report on impacts related to GE products.

[www.Geinfo.org.nz/022005/03.html](http://www.Geinfo.org.nz/022005/03.html)

**Monsanto Assault on U.S. Farmers**

reveals thousands of Monsanto investigations, nearly 100 lawsuits and numerous bankruptcies The Center for Food Safety have released a report detailing Monsanto's lawsuits against American farmers. 13/01/05

[www.centerforfoodsafety.org/Monsanto/susfarmersreport.cfm](http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/Monsanto/susfarmersreport.cfm)



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

**GE weedkiller use increases** 28/10/04

Farmers weekly, UK. A new study based on official USDA data on pesticide use reveals a sharp increase in pesticide use after 3 years of GE

crops. Charles Benbrook, formerly executive director of US Nat. Academy of Science concluded that biotech industry claims of reduced pesticide use are unfounded.

[www.Geinfo.org.nz/022005/07.html](http://www.Geinfo.org.nz/022005/07.html)

**Inspiration - Trees as solutions**

30 years ago, in Kenya, 90% of the forest had been chopped down. With no trees the land became like a desert. To prepare meals, women spent hours looking for firewood. A woman, Wangari watched this, she planted a tree, then taught other women to plant trees. They were paid a small amount for each sapling they grew. She organised women all over Kenya in the Green Belt Movement, more and more trees covered the land.

Kenya's president didn't like this, so police intimidated and beat Wangari. Over 30 years she was accused of "subversion" and arrested many times, even hospitalised with head injuries, but she realised she was on the right path. 30 million trees have been planted in Africa, one tree at a time. The landscapes--both the external one of the land and the internal one of the people--have been transformed. Wangari, now 65, is Kenya's Assistant Minister for the Environment. The former president is now gone.

Wangari Maathai is the first African woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize recently. After in a speech entitled, "What Do Trees Have To Do With Peace?" she said wars are fought over limited natural resources, oil, land, coal or diamonds. She called for an end to corporate greed, and for leaders to build more just societies.

"When we plant trees, we plant the seeds of peace and seeds of hope. We also secure the future for our children. I call on those around the world to celebrate by planting a tree wherever you are." Inviting us all to get involved she said "Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own."

### Minister to abolish GE scrutiny board.

29/12/04 Guardian, UK Environment secretary Margaret Beckett will scrap UK GE watchdog after it repeatedly placed obstacles in the way of government plans to introduce GE crops. The Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission was created to discuss social, ethical and economic issues at the height of opposition to GE crops. 3 reports were produced, one demanding wide buffer zones and a compensation scheme.  
[www.GEinfo.org.nz/022005/08.html](http://www.GEinfo.org.nz/022005/08.html)

### Bid to Stop US "Rubber-Stamping" Transgene Contamination

Mae-Wan Ho. [www.i-sis.org.uk](http://www.i-sis.org.uk)  
The ISP have submitted strong objections to US's proposed change in policy that would allow companies to contaminate the food supply with unauthorized test crops. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published a proposal on 24.11.04 that would allow experimental GM crops grown on "test" sites to legally enter the food chain. Starlink GM corn, continued to be detected in the US grain supply and in food shipments to Bolivia, Japan and South Korea as recently as Autumn 2003.

### GM policy shift in Europe

26/01/05 The Scientist, Ned Stafford  
[www.biomedcentral.com/news/20050126/02](http://www.biomedcentral.com/news/20050126/02)  
New EU Agriculture Commissioner signals intent to move to EU wide regulation of planting of GE crops rather than current situation of leaving it up to each member state. This arises from dissatisfaction with Germany's new coexistence/liability law which is so discouraging to would-be GE growers.

### GE corn, soybeans found growing wild

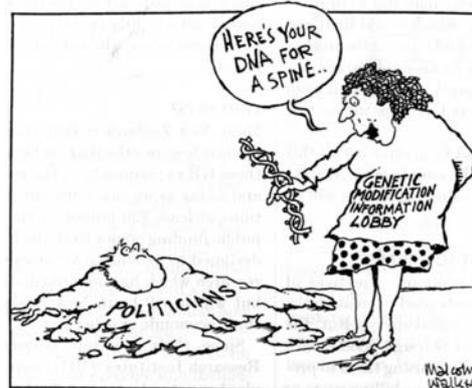
Japan Times 14/12/04  
GE corn and soybeans have been found growing wild near Shimizu port, citizens groups have said. The GE Free group said GE rapeseed/canola had also been found growing wild near Fukuoka's Hakata port. This discovery of GE rapeseed follows detection at 6 other ports. "Corn and soybeans are less likely to disperse than rapeseed; it's amazing that they grow wild," said Masaharu Kawata, a lecturer in chemical biology at Yokkaichi Univ.  
[www.GEinfo.org.nz/022005/04.html](http://www.GEinfo.org.nz/022005/04.html)

### Monitoring the environmental effects of GM crops

27/01/05 Rome [www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2005/89259/index.html](http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2005/89259/index.html)  
A consultation of experts convened at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), recommended that any responsible deployment of GM crops needs to comprise the whole technology development process, from the pre-release risk assessment, to biosafety considerations and post release monitoring.

### Glyphosate-resistant common ragweed confirmed in Arkansas

28/01/05 Delta Farm Press, USA  
[deltafarmpress.com/news/050128-ragweed-confirmed-Arkansas/](http://deltafarmpress.com/news/050128-ragweed-confirmed-Arkansas/)



### Italian Parliament Approves GM Farming Law

Reuters 27/01/05  
Legislation has been approved in Italy allows farmers to plant GE crops, if they choose to do so but biotechnology supporters complained the bill would essentially uphold the moratorium. The so-called "co-existence" law sets out rules to ensure conventional and organic crops are not contaminated by GM seeds...it will be up to each of Italy's 20 regions to set the detailed rules and most of them have said they want to remain GM-free, effectively maintaining an unofficial EU-wide ban on GM foods formally lifted earlier this year.

### U.S. Scientists Say They Are Told to Alter Findings

10/01/05 LA Times  
Over 200 fish & wildlife researchers have cited cases where conclusions were reversed to weaken protections and favor business. Over half the biologists and researchers responding to a Union of Concerned Scientists survey said they knew cases in which commercial interests, including timber, grazing, development and energy companies, had applied political pressure to reverse scientific

conclusions deemed harmful to their business.

### Group Claims Biotech Don't Deliver on Promises

03/02/05 [www.enn.com/today.html?id=7058](http://www.enn.com/today.html?id=7058)  
The biotechnology industry has failed to deliver on promises to revolutionize agriculture with plants genetically engineered to be healthier, drought resistant and tastier. The Center for Science in the Public Interest said drought resistance and other new traits desired by consumers or needed by Third World farmers have yet to be produced. They reached the conclusion after analyzing publicly available data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration. DuPont subsidiary Pioneer Hi-Bred International plans to introduce several other GE products, including corn resistant to drought between 2007 and 2010. "Despite glowing pronouncements from the agricultural biotechnology industry, the regulatory data suggests that the industry is stagnating, not thriving," Greg Jaffe said

### Ottawa asked to approve GE salmon.

CBC. 08/12/04  
Aqua Bounty technologies is seeking approval to supply Canadian diners with GE salmon, that grow twice as fast as normal fish., after 4 years trying to get US FDA approval. A member of the Royal Society of Canada expert panel on biotech stated, "If those fish were to escape and reproductively or ecologically interact with wild populations, there could be some severe detrimental effects to those wild populations".  
[www.GEinfo.org.nz/022005/06.html](http://www.GEinfo.org.nz/022005/06.html)

### Group urges ban on crops for drugs.

Sacramento Bee. 16/12/04  
The Union for Concerned Scientists have called on the USDA to ban open plantings of corn, soy and other food crops engineered to produce pharmaceutical and industrial products. A panel from top agricultural schools concluded the US food supply isn't fully protected from drug compounds grown in food crops. The editor of the report, an entomology professor stated, "seed mix-ups and pollen movement are the main contamination concerns."  
[www.GEinfo.org.nz/022005/05.html](http://www.GEinfo.org.nz/022005/05.html)

**GE Free Rotorua take action**

"More than 50 people from all over the country gathered at Apumoana Marae for workshops, creativity, and action against the GE tree field trials on Auckland Anniversary weekend. GE Free activists painted banners, shared meals, learnt about the implications of the trial, discussed how to lobby local government bodies for GE Free legislation and participated in a meeting on Maori and GE. The march on Sunday was clear and strong as we walked along Te Ngae Road and received loud and frequent support from passing motorists. The protest at the trial site itself was marred by the aggressive behaviour of security guards - no decontamination was attempted, but unfortunately 4 people were arrested and physical injuries sustained by 2 of the arrestees.

Media coverage focused on the arrests not the GE pine tree trials, which utilise antibiotic resistant marker genes and viral promoters and have serious implications for biodiversity and sustainability. Despite the arrests, there was a strong sense of solidarity and renewed energy with further calls for the trials to end supported by a revitalised campaign. Contact:-  
Amanda Reid [loki1@paradise.net.nz](mailto:loki1@paradise.net.nz)



**GE FREE NORTHLAND**

in Food & Environment has continued to work constructively with local government, to ensure that GMO land use is kept out of our region. The territorial authorities in particular\* have shown great leadership and innovation, in commissioning the Risk Evaluation & Options Report (on GMOs) which will address the risks of GMO land use to our unique geographical region (and our primary

producers, key markets, brand, tangata whenua, unique biodiversity etc)

\*Whangarei, Kaipara, Far North and Rodney District and Waitakere City Councils will support and jointly fund a Risks and Options Report on GE in the Northland peninsula. A Risk Evaluation & Options Report (by Dr. Royden Somerville, QC, & Simon Terry Associates and Mitchell Partnerships) will be available later this month.

"Northland Conservation Board met with ERMA. 21/01/05 to discuss issues including:

**A)** the lifting of the moratorium on release of GMOs despite key research recommended by the RCI on GM in 2001 into gaps of knowledge and risky areas like HGT, and our biosecurity agencies already being overstretched

**B)** Errors made by MAF (regarding protocols for seed importation into NZ) resulting in GM contaminated maize being planted in NZ last summer (including one Far North District site) and subsequent lack of notification of local authorities regarding this illegal GMO biosecurity breach. The NCB expect immediate mandatory written notification of any illegal GMO biosecurity breach in the future ( and as an Interested Party require advice of applications for GE field trials or releases).

**C)** NZ Landcare Research GE contraceptive possum baits experimentation.

**D)** Risks of GMO land use (or aquaculture) to indigenous biodiversity (the Conservation Estate)

Northern branch Forest & Bird and GE FREE NORTHLAND members attended to back up the NCB. Thank you NCB for your commitment.

**Pressure needs to be kept on MAF** to ensure that appropriate follow up on all sites where the GM contaminated maize was accidentally planted (including not allowing any farmer to plant maize on these sites due to the risk of GM contaminated volunteers).

\*\*\*\*\*  
GE FREE NORTHLAND has an outstanding appeal on the Far North District Council's proposed District

Plan (despite over 170+ submissions against GMO land use, the FNDC failed to act). The FNDC has subsequently contributed funding to the independent GE report and legal opinion by Dr. Royden Somerville, QC and Simon Terry Associates; and joined the Working Party on GMOs.

\*\*\*\*\*  
Northland Regional Council 18/10/04 At a CEO's of Regional Authorities meeting, Local Government NZ gave a presentation, supporting the urgent need for an independent legal opinion to be commissioned on the role of regional authorities re: GMO land use.

Only Northland Regional Council & Environment Bay of Plenty Regional Council voted to contribute funds. [www.envbop.govt.nz/publications/media/030219ac.doc](http://www.envbop.govt.nz/publications/media/030219ac.doc)

**Pressure needs to be put on YOUR local Regional Council- write and ask them how your CEO voted on this important issue.** Even a few Regional Councils and Local Government NZ could fund this important work.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**Table a copy of new Sustainability Council of NZ document with your District, Regional, Unitary Council Mayor, Councillors & Chairman.**

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

Communities and their elected representatives face a new resource management issue: the outdoor production of genetically modified (GM) food varieties. 4 pages [www.sustainabilitynz.org/docs/CouncilOptionsforGMmanagement.pdf](http://www.sustainabilitynz.org/docs/CouncilOptionsforGMmanagement.pdf)

also **Frequently Asked Questions About GM, GM Foods & Managing GM in the Community** [www.sustainabilitynz.org/docs/GM\\_FAQ.pdf](http://www.sustainabilitynz.org/docs/GM_FAQ.pdf)

**Northland Councils Investigate Local Management of GMOs** The Exec Sum & full rpt: [www.sustainabilitynz.org](http://www.sustainabilitynz.org)

**Start fighting against GE in your local area table a copy of the report with your council and ask them for a response to its findings.**

**Genome Scrambling - Myth or Reality? Transformation-Induced Mutations in Transgenic Crop Plants** EcoNexus, UK Oct 2004 [www.genet-info.org/](http://www.genet-info.org/)

Summary: Based on peer-reviewed papers from scientific literature and data from 7 representative applications for commercial release submitted to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) it documents the known effects of both transgene insertion and tissue culture on commercial crop varieties. Some conclusions are:

1. Little is known about the impact of transgene insertion.
2. These few studies suggest that transgene insertion is never precise and is often associated with significant rearrangement and/or loss of plant genomic DNA.
3. Transgene insertion is typically associated with insertion of DNA sequences other than those intended including bacterial plasmid sequences, superfluous transgene DNA & DNA of unknown origin and may accidentally include bacterial genomic DNA.
4. No-one has ever successfully demonstrated the full damage caused by insertion of an entire transgene using a particle bombardment method.
5. Despite this lack of information, USDA approval of GMOs is based on the presumption that insertion of the transgene is precise.
6. The report outlines the possible consequences of these mutations for crop biosafety.

The report's authors can be contacted at: [a.wilson@econexus.info](mailto:a.wilson@econexus.info)

**REGISTER YOUR HOME AS A**

**GE FREE ZONE** Pass the info on to all your friends and any folk in rural areas you know support the initiative. Properties registered - 5,351 covering a total 348,005.12 acres.

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

**T Shirts** natural unbleached cotton with rainbow GE Free NZ logo \$20.00 incl.P&P from Head office. Cotton shopping bags with same rainbow design \$ 5. Bumper stickers + GE Free corflute signs also available see website.

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

**GE Status of Ice Cream products**

**Green-GE Free policy**

**Golden Circle Icy Fruit Sticks** (Golden Circle)

**Guilt Free Ice Cream** (Talley's Frozen Foods LTD)

**Hansell's Dessert Topping** (Hansells New Zealand Ltd)

**JJ's Ice Cream Wafers** (JJ Wafer Biscuits Ltd.)

**Kapiti Icecream** (Kapiti Cheeses Ltd)

**Streets Ice Creams and Paddle Pops** (Unilever)

**Talley's Ice Creams and Frozen Seafoods** (Talley's Frozen Foods Ltd LTD)

**Orange zone (on the way to GE-Free):**

**Basics and Signature products** (house brands of Progressive Enterprises, which operates Foodtown, Woolworths and Countdown [customerinfo@progressive.co.nz](mailto:customerinfo@progressive.co.nz) Tel: 0800 40 40 40

**Budget and PAMs products** (house brands of Foodstuffs NZ Ltd, which operates Pak N Save, New World, Write Price & Four Square) [www.foodstuffs.co.nz/info](http://www.foodstuffs.co.nz/info) [melissa@foodstuffs.co.nz](mailto:melissa@foodstuffs.co.nz) 0800 245 114

**Crofters Cheesecakes**

**Gaytime Ice Cream Cones**

**Haagen-Dazs** (General Mills)

**Heavenly Treats and Lite Licks** (Chateau Crème Delight Ice Cream Co.)

**Kilinchy Gold Ice Cream** (Chateau Crème Delight Ice Cream Co.)

**Kiwi Ice Cream** (Kiwi Ice-Cream Co.)

**Masterfoods Dessert Toppings** (Masterfoods / Effem)

**Moritz Ice Cream** (Tip Top Ice Cream Co.)

**Movenpick Icecream** (Chateau Crème Delight Ice Cream Co.)

**Tip Top Ice Creams and Fruit Lollies** (Tip Top Ice Cream Co.)

**Red zone (may contain GE-derived ingredients)**

**Betta Ice Cream Cones**

**Cadbury Ice Creams**

**Sara Lee Products**

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