



# GE Free New Zealand In Food and Environment Newsletter May 2008

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

## **ERMA procedure fails to take account of GE risks GE Free New Zealand court case states failure to act.**

GE Free New Zealand is awaiting the results of a court case taken recently citing a failure by ERMA to properly weigh the risks and advantages of GE field trials to New Zealand.

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. GE Free NZ lawyer Tom Bennion argued that there was no other place for risks to be addressed than at the field trial stage, before a crop is conditionally or fully released.

We believe that field testing restraints are not just about keeping GM organisms contained while growing but to find out what long term dangers they might pose to the environment, animals and humans.

ERMA appeared 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.

To date ERMA has denied they have any statutory jurisdiction to ensure that any adverse effects testing into ecosystem and health of the public need to be undertaken at the field trial stage.

GE Free NZ presented scientific evidence to show harm had occurred to animals and the ecosystem from the Bt Cry genes similar to those used in the Bt Brassicas. Key concerns were judged "negligible". We believe that

testing essential to ensure these vegetables were safe for humans to eat before they go into 10 years of trials. More- [www.gefree.org.nz](http://www.gefree.org.nz)

**ERMA NZ receives GM Onion,**

### **GE FREE NZ ARE URGENTLY APPEALING FOR DONATIONS**

To cover the costs of our lawyer – please send any donations to GE Free NZ, PO Box 39158, Wellington

**Spring Onion, Garlic & Leek Field Test Application 11.4.08**

ERMA NZ has received an application from the NZ Inst - Crop and Food Research to field test GE onions, spring onions, garlic and leeks.

Crop and Food Research has an approval to field test up to 2700 GM onion plants, modified for herbicide resistance. It wants to run a field test over a 10-year period, planting all four species over 2.5 hectares. It seems that ERMA can only influence the applicant prior to their lodging an application. This is the one chance ERMA has to ask scientists to assess the risks, but instead they appear to be conspiring with applicants to redraw the rules and debase the standards;

continually setting new precedents, which later allow an easier passage to approval.

Crop and Food Research wants to plant onion seed directly in the ground and allow some onion plants to flower in the field and produce seed. The flowering onions would be caged in order to prevent insects carrying pollen to non-GM onions outside the site.

**Public submissions must be received by Monday, 26 May 2008 in writing to ERMA New Zealand, PO Box 131, Wellington or online - website.**

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

**Fax (04) 914 0433 Email**

**submissions to :**

[submissions@ermanz.govt.nz](mailto:submissions@ermanz.govt.nz)

A public hearing will be in July.

### **AGRESEARCH GE Animals with Human Genes Trials Pending**

AgResearch plans to trial many different GE animal types in its laboratories and farms.

AgResearch is preparing an application to undertake GE research and development on a wide range of species including cattle, sheep, goats, deer, zebu, buffalo, horses, chickens and rabbits, and use genetic material from a wide range of donor species including human (synthetic) proteins and trials could take place around the country.

**Write a submission to next GE Applications**

## 16.4.08 "Restore Moratorium"

GE Failures Threaten National Interest

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A Moratorium on applications to release GE organisms must be restored to protect the National interest. It is the only reasonable course of action in light of a new report (1) **A Review of the 49 recommendations of the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification (2008)** by Sustainable Future.

The study reveals major failures in the development of systems recommended by the Royal Commission on GM to protect New Zealand. "Despite accepting the advice of the \$6 million Royal Commission the ball has been dropped. The gaps in regulation and strategic planning now seriously threaten the economy, environment and community well-being of New Zealand," says Jon Carapiet from GE Free NZ.

The independent audit of post-RCGM responses show that failures include:

- 1) Consumers being left in the dark despite promises to set up a GE-free labeling regime to allow people to choose what they eat.
- 2) The strategic threat to conventional farming and exports remains.
- 3) The regulatory authority ERMA has no powers to ensure research on GE is ever carried out negative effects.
- 4) Lack of planning for GE-free zones and a national farm-management system, means New Zealand faces the threat of civil conflict as farmer fights farmers over liability for contamination and lost exports.
- 5) Ethically inappropriate uses of food animals as cheap 'bio-reactors' for chemicals can continue despite being unacceptable to the wider community.

Only the so-called "People's Moratorium" - the outcome of massive public protests in the early 2000's; which led to some 70% of New Zealanders demanding a GE-free environment and food production, is

currently in place in New Zealand.

**To calm public unrest the government said it accepted most of the Royal Commissions recommendations and would take action.**

But of the 49 recommendations that the RCGM put forward only 20 have been "Fully implemented", with 12 "Partially" and 17 "Not" implemented.

**"The Governments "pick and choose" approach to the RCGM recommendations have significant damaging impact on the intention of the RCGM to "proceed with caution" that protect the New Zealand people and commons," says Claire Bleakley.**

Serious failures in the official response to the RCGM has also left it to voluntary and public-interest community groups like GE Free NZ to act as watchdogs and raise the alarm.

Recent High Court action (2) undertaken against ERMA directly relates to The Royal Commission call for research on the environmental impacts on soil ecosystems to be required by ERMA (6.12).

"The tragedy is that we have seen such groups as MADGE – acting in the public interest in court– being crushed by vested interests at the same time as officials are failing to act in the public interest," says Jon Carapiet. "The serious gaps in response to the Royal Commission are a recipe for disaster and warrant the reinstatement of the moratorium immediately."

1) McGuinness W., Versteeg S., and White M., (2008) Review of the 49 recommendations of the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification. (Sustainable Future). The thorough review covers the history of the RCGM and its recommendations seven years on. The Royal Commission on Genetic Modification (RCGM) was convened by Government in 2001 to assess a way forward for New Zealand in light of the rising safety concerns

and resistance to the growing and eating of GM crops and food.

The 20 fully implemented recommendations include :

- the ability to delegate assessment of low risk and development of GMO's to Institutional Biological Safety Committees (IBSC) (6.1, 6.3, 6.4, 6.7, 6.10),
- that an approval to develop and import allows for the holding and breeding of the genetically modified organisms (GMO) (6.5),
- the new category of conditional release,
- that MoRST develop a long term biotechnology strategy for New Zealand (14.4).

Of the RCGM 17 non implemented recommendations they sought to:

- Ensure the right to choice by preserving GMO Free food and land and organic methods of farming (7.7).
- They recommended a labelling regime for GM food and seed (7.2)
- That Non-food animals or animal less likely to find their way into the food chain be used as bioreactors (7.5);
- They sought to allow communities to establish GMO Free zones (13.1) ·

They recommended that an Office of Parliamentary Commissioner on Biotechnology be set up to oversee, educate on the way forward for biotechnology (14.3).

**Finally they recommended that research on the environmental impacts on soil ecosystems be required by ERMA (6.12).**

**This directly relates to the reasons for High-Court legal action taken by GE-free NZ and others, challenging ERMA's approval of GE brassica trials.**



2) Read about GM Brassica High Court case two day hearing on 31st March. [www.gefree.org.nz](http://www.gefree.org.nz)

Steffan Browning of Soil & Health said: "Particularly significant is the Reviews finding that... investigation into potential adverse effects of GE in the environment has been at a low to zero level, and protection for beekeepers and co-existence systems between GE and non GE producers have not been devised."

### GE Push Could Prompt Civil Conflict 11.4.08

New applications in New Zealand for GE crops to be allowed to flower and seed (1) and for more GE animal experiments (2) could set farmer against farmer and prompt civil conflict.

The latest push for GE applications by Crown Research Institutes, locally based speculators and overseas biotechnology investors threatens New Zealand's export markets and reputation for producing safe, clean, natural food, and misdirects much-needed investment in sustainable IPM and organic production.

Their plans run counter to the values of the majority of New Zealanders and threaten the livelihoods of thousands of farmers who already benefit from our GE-free, clean-green reputation.

**"We know from past experience that accidents will happen. Allowing experimental GE plants to flower would be tantamount to sabotage," says Jon Carapiet from GE Free NZ.**

**"The plans to promote GE are no less than an attack on the reputation and economic value of Brand New Zealand."**

The risk of pushing the GE barrow is that conventional farmers will be forced into conflict, in the courts, or even in the field - to defend their land and export markets.

Conflict will also be created with suppliers wanting to meet the demands of major companies like Goodman Fielder, Watties and Zespri, who do not want GE contaminated crops.

Independent research commissioned by the Sustainability Council of New Zealand shows some 70% of New Zealanders, including a similar proportion of farmers, see no role for

GE in our agricultural system. New Zealand has no GE releases and yet is hugely successful.

The future for an ethical biotechnology strategy for New Zealand is clearly shown by local and overseas success with non-GE development of high-yield, insect-tolerant, and other beneficial characteristics that avoid the unacceptable ethical, cultural, environmental and food-safety risks associated with transgenic GE.

### More about the GE applications

#### 1) Moves to kill NZ GE-free status by stealth Green Party PR: 11.4.08

Ms Fitzsimons says. "What worries me is that, despite strict regulations aimed at preventing the spread of GE organisms in field trials including in this one, **it is in the interests of the Labour-led government, Crop and Food and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to have an unfortunate accident and ruin this country's GE-free status.**"

**There is precedent for sloppy controls** leading to such 'accidents' in previous brassica trials and in the Northland tamarillo trial, which was strongly criticised by the Royal Commission on GE.



2) **Euthanase GE Animals, Don't Create More!** Soil & Health Assoc. of NZ PR-11.4.08 An application by AgResearch to trial many different genetically engineered animal types in its laboratories and farms is an ugly step in the wrong direction for brand New Zealand's clean green 100% Pure image, according to the Soil & Health Association. **"Kiwis don't want GE. Our export markets don't want GE. The GE trials we have already are being mismanaged.** It is time to euthanase AgResearch's current GE cattle, not add a macabre zoo to their unnatural and unwanted experiment," says Soil & Health spokesperson

Steffan Browning.

**AgResearch is preparing an application to undertake GE research and development on a wide range of species including cattle, sheep, goats, deer, zebu, buffalo, horses, chickens and rabbits, and use genetic material from a wide range of donor species including human (synthetic) proteins.**

The application is to also include a scaling up of current research and to undertake normal farm-scale activities so that sufficient numbers of animals can be maintained to enable pharmaceutical and nutraceutical production.

"The broad range of animals and recombinations envisaged by AgResearch comes when previous and existing experiments have still not been adequately managed and very real risks have still not been properly investigated," says Mr. Browning. "On a site inspection at AgResearch's Ruakura GE facility, Soil & Health saw non GE sheep and cattle grazing on land subject to drainage from the GE facility. There is a poor level of care and concern about the environment within and beyond this and previous GE experimental facility boundaries."

"GE constructs and derivatives including antibiotic resistant genes have been located in the soil at current GE facilities yet further research and clean up has been minimal, and one retired GE sheep experimental property at Whakamaru is once again for sale with conventional animals grazing there without any follow up residues research."

**"AgResearch appears to act as a law unto itself, and in one example AgResearch breached conditions of its GE cattle consent by inserting a GE embryo into a GE cow.** Its penalty was remonstrating with itself by a review of its procedures. **The original consent had expressly disallowed such a procedure, and it is very difficult to imagine a science technician not being well aware of their actions.**"

"Every ERMA approved field trial, whether plant or animal, has fallen down on its conditions and for AgResearch to be applying for a veritable zoo to play with, is both

risky, unethical and goes against New Zealand's point of difference in the world, clean green, 100% Pure and essentially GE Free."

"Euthanasia of AgResearch's current GE herd and elimination of all GE field tests will be better for New Zealand's environmental and economic future."

### Study Based on Farmers Experience Exposes Risks of GM Crops.

ISIS PR 24.4.08 Dr. Mae-Wan Ho

### The first study of its kind, shows how the risks of GM technology outweigh the benefits especially in the long term.

Canada, the US and Argentina were the first countries in the world to commercialise GM crops. A decade later, risk assessment for GM crops is still ignoring farmers' knowledge and their years of experience in growing GM crops.

Ian Mauro & Stéphane McLachlan, Univ of Manitoba, Canada, completed a study of farmers from Manitoba and across Canada based on interviews (n=15) and survey by mail (n=370) conducted between 2002 and 2003.

It is useful in identifying the actual risks and benefits for farmers not yet committed to growing GM crops.

Mauro says. "Using quantitative and qualitative methods, we've documented the benefits and risks associated with herbicide-tolerant (HT) canola. We found that farmers have been primarily placed at risk due to the proliferation of HT volunteers. (*seeds that grow after harvest*)

Smaller farms and those with a longer history of GM canola use were at highest risk."

Canadian farmers rapidly adopted HT canola following its commercial release in 1995. The great majority are grown in the western Canadian provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.

Read more at [www.i-sis.org.uk/canadianFarmersGMOs.php](http://www.i-sis.org.uk/canadianFarmersGMOs.php)

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## Exposed the great GM crops myth

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### Major new study shows that GM Soya produces 10 % less food than its conventional equivalent - 20.4.08

[www.independent.co.uk/environment/green-living/exposed-the-great-gm-crops-myth-812179.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/green-living/exposed-the-great-gm-crops-myth-812179.html)

Last week the biggest study of its kind ever conducted – the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development - concluded that **GM was not the answer to world hunger**

(Geoffrey Lean)

Genetic modification actually cuts the productivity of crops, an authoritative new study shows, undermining repeated claims that a switch to the controversial technology is needed to solve the growing world food crisis.

The study at Kansas University over 3 years in the US grain belt - has found that **GM soya produces about 10% less food** than its conventional equivalent, contradicting assertions by advocates of the technology that it increases yields.

Many farmers who had changed over to the GM crop had "noticed yields not as high as expected even under optimal conditions".

### "People were asking the question 'how come I don't get as high a yield as I used to?'"

Professor Barney Gordon grew a Monsanto GM soybean and an almost identical conventional variety in the same field. The GE crop produced only 70 bushels per acre, compared with 77 bushels from the non-GM one.

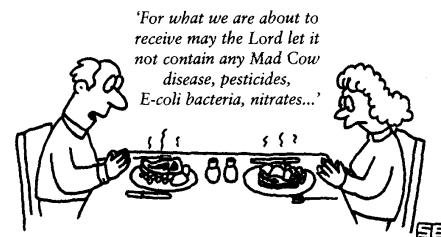
The GM crop - engineered to resist Monsanto's own weed killer, Roundup - recovered only when he added extra manganese, leading to suggestions that the modification hindered the crop's take-up of the essential element from the soil.

Even with the addition it brought the GM soya's yield to equal that of the conventional one, rather than surpassing it.

A similar situation seems to have happened with GM cotton in the US, where the total US crop declined even as GM technology took over.

The new study confirms earlier research at the University of Nebraska, which found that another Monsanto GM soya produced 6 per cent less than its closest conventional relative, and 11 per cent less than the best non-GM soya available. Monsanto said that the soya had not been engineered to increase yields, and that it was now developing one that would.

Critics doubt whether the company will achieve this, saying that it requires more complex modification. Lester Brown, president of the Earth Policy Institute in Washington - and who was one of the first to predict the current food crisis - said that the physiology of plants was now reaching the limits of the productivity that could be achieved.



### PUBLIC DISQUIET OVER GE FIELD TRIALS RESULTS IN SABOTAGE -16 1 08

[http://straightfurrow.farmonline.co.nz/news\\_daily.asp?ag\\_id=47503](http://straightfurrow.farmonline.co.nz/news_daily.asp?ag_id=47503)

19 GE sapling trees, modified for additional copies of a radiata pine gene involved in reproductive development, were cut down. A GE Free sign was left.

### MAF REPORT SHOWS BIOSECURITY BREACH GE Free

(NZ) PR 17.2.08 GE Free NZ concerns about facility inspection were backed up recently in the MAF report on the Scion GE Tree biosecurity breach, obvious problems included holes created by rabbits.

MAF will be monitoring for the next 2 years after the removal of the trees, which is due to occur soon.

See Soil & Health PR 5.5.08

## GM Failures Continue

The GM industry has been ailing at least as far back as 2005, but kept alive by an aggressive campaign of disinformation. GM Watch ([www.gmwatch.org](http://www.gmwatch.org)) brings you the latest GM failures 2007-2008

### GM cotton debacle in India

GM cotton has been failing in India and elsewhere for years [1] (Broken Promises, SiS 22), escalating the epidemic of farmers' suicides [2] (Stem Farmers' Suicides with Organic Farming, SiS 32). Unfortunately, the Indian government has allowed the commercial planting to continue with drastic consequences.

### BT cotton failed in Vidarbha

A study on the introduction of Bt cotton in India's cotton-growing belt of Vidarbha revealed that it failed in the region. Suman Sahai, director of Gene Campaign, which conducted the study, said that despite knowing that Bt cotton would not work in rainfed areas, the state government introduced it. The high input costs of Bt cotton increased indebtedness, and the study showed that 70 per cent of small farmers lost their landholdings as collateral for loans that they could never repay.

The study also showed that farmers who adopted Bt cotton had a net lower income than non-Bt cotton farmers. Seed dealers had promised farmers that they would get 12–15 quintals per acre when the actual yields were 3–5 quintals [3]

In February 2007, five districts of Vidarbha where Bt cotton was widely adopted reported nearly 1 500 farmers committing suicide in the previous 20 months [4].

### More livestock deaths from grazing Bt cotton

With reports of deaths of livestock that had grazed on Bt cotton in 2006 still fresh [5] (Mass Deaths in Sheep Grazing on Bt Cotton, SiS 30), more deaths and illnesses in sheep and goats were seen in the early months of 2007.

Symptoms included bloating of the stomach, black patches on the intestines, lung congestion, green and red mucus flow from nostrils, reddish urine, sneezing, and skin allergies.

Women cotton pickers also reported skin allergies [6], another problem with Bt cotton reported widely in 2006 [7] (More Illnesses Linked to Bt Crops, SiS 30). [www.isis.org.uk/gmFailuresContinue.php](http://www.isis.org.uk/gmFailuresContinue.php)

### “GM-Free Organic Agriculture to Feed the World” 18/04/08 ISIS PR

Dr. Mae-Wan Ho

International Panel of 400 Agricultural Scientists Call for Fundamental Change in Farming Practice to counteract soaring food prices, hunger, social inequities and environmental disasters. They dispelled aggressive corporate propaganda saying that genetically modified (GM) crops are highly controversial and will not play a substantial role in addressing the challenges of climate change, loss of biodiversity, hunger and poverty.

### Instead, small-scale farmers and agro-ecological methods are the way forward; with indigenous and local knowledge playing as important a role as formal science.

Furthermore, the rush to grow crops for biofuels could exacerbate food shortages and price rises.

These are the conclusions to the most thorough examination of global agriculture, on a scale comparable to the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change.

The final report, from IAASTD, was formally launched at a plenary in Johannesburg, South Africa on 15 April 2008 [1-3] and simultaneously released around the world. The report - 2 500 pages- has taken more than 400 scientists 4 years to complete.

In one mighty stroke, it has swept aside years of corporate propaganda that served as a major diversion from urgent task of implementing world sustainable food production.

An estimated 850 million people are hungry and malnourished today because they can't get access to, or afford the supplies they need.

The report said that efforts should focus on the needs of small-scale farmers in diverse ecosystems, and areas with the greatest needs. Measures would include giving farmers better access to knowledge, technology and credit. It would

also require investment to bring the necessary information and infrastructure to rural areas. [www.isis.org.uk/GMFreeOrganicAgriculture.php](http://www.isis.org.uk/GMFreeOrganicAgriculture.php)

### N.Z taxpayer could be left, yet again, with a contaminated GE site to clean up. 17.3.08

We have been informed that Crop and Food have not planted GM onions this year and that the trial site is pending early de-registration, despite there being over 5 ½ years before ERMA approval runs out. The reason has not been disclosed.

In 2003 ERMA gave a 10-year approval to field trial GE Round-up Ready herbicide resistant onions, engineered with Monsanto patented genes that confer tolerance to glyphosate. The trial was part of a private/public partnership with American corporation Seminis, a subsidiary of Monsanto. Annual reports of 3 years of trials reported dismal results and plant failures. The onion plants were subject to poor germination, weak growth, thrip damage and bulbs succumbed to disease during storage.

Herbicide spray applications averaged 2-3 times per season with a high dose spray regime, of 2x, 4x & 6x the recommended glyphosate application rate. Weather, seed and planting times were given as the reason for the low success rate but no explanation was given for bulbs rotting quickly that did not store well.

ERMA did not require environmental effects testing. GE Free NZ hold concerns about the Lincoln site where the GE onions were planted. There were no soil tests carried out to investigate GE effects or high dose spray on soil microbial communities & ecosystems, the occurrence of horizontal gene transfer, new diseases resulting in the soil or transfer of GE DNA to other organisms.

### UK Protests call for Biofuel Targets to be Scrapped 16.4.08 joint PR :- Biofuelwatch/ Global Forest Coalition

There were demonstrations in London and across the UK against the introduction of mandatory biofuel blending. Outside Downing Street speakers from Friends of the Earth,

Global Forest Coalition, GM Freeze, Campaign against Climate Change and Biofuelwatch condemned the government's decision to go ahead with its biofuel policy against overwhelming evidence of catastrophic impacts on climate, communities, biodiversity and food security.

More protests took place at BP and Tesco fuel stations, two of the companies with significant investment in biofuels from large-scale monocultures, who have been strongly lobbying for mandatory biofuel blending.

"The UK has chosen to ignore a vast mountain of evidence that biofuels are contributing to hunger, climate change, deforestation and human rights abuses," said Dr. Rachel Smolker, author of "The Real Cost of Agrofuels.

Almuth Ernsting, Biofuelwatch adds, "... agrofuels are causing ever greater harm to the climate, to forests and other ecosystems, to communities in the global South, to biodiversity worldwide, and to food sovereignty and food security. We need a moratorium on agrofuel incentives."

**The New Zealand government have also introduced mandatory biofuel blending.**

**GE Free NZ attends Biodiversity Conference**

GE Free NZ president Claire Bleakley will represent GE Free NZ at the Planet Diversity Conference (www.planet-diversity.org) in Bonn from the 12-16 May. The conference to run simultaneously with the Cartagena Protocol and CBD talks also in Bonn.

GE Free NZ has co-organised with Australian networks a workshop on GMO's downunder to be held on 14th May, to discuss biodiversity and the threat from GMOs.

**DINNER TABLE FACTS OF THE WEEK:**

- **UN SAYS OIL, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIOFUELS PRODUCING GLOBAL UNREST**The United Nations have sounded the alarm on the global climate change as it relates to the

**out of control rise of food prices around the world. Here are some of the new statistics reported by Sir John Holmes, the UN's emergency relief coordinator:**

- **Food and fuel prices have risen 40% on average globally since last summer.**
- **Staple foods have seen price increases of 80% in three years.**
- **Climate Change has doubled the number of global disasters from an average of 200 a year to 400 a year, which is exacerbating food shortages.**
- **In the last three months, rising food prices have spawned riots and protests in Egypt, Haiti, the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Bolivia and Indonesia.**
- **According to the World Bank, 33 countries face unrest due to increasing food prices.**

and the lack of priority it gives to risks from environmental contaminants, pesticide and veterinary drug residues and other chemical hazards.

**High food prices have health consequences** Green Party PR

Skyrocketing prices are putting some healthy foods out of the reach of people on low incomes and will inevitably impact on the health of New Zealanders, the Green Party says. She is concerned at the 7% increase in the price of fresh vegetables reported in food price index figures released by Statistics New Zealand. A 2.8 % increase in the price of bread, 44% for cheese, 22% for milk, and butter up 82%; food prices increased 6 % in the year to March 2008. Many Asian countries have limited their rice exports to ensure supplies for their own citizens. "New Zealand is part of the same global food crisis that the rest of the world faces. We currently import about half our food. We need a food

### **Biotech effort to mislead back with a vengeance.**

There appears to be a renewed effort in a variety of news sources to revise the misleading information about GE. Local freebie newspapers and farming press have again been running biased news articles supporting genetic engineering. It is important for the public to ensure both sides of the argument are fully represented in the press. It is important to ask the media to uphold a standard of fair, honest, providing reputable information.

There are some far reaching applications in the offing that may well affect furtherfield than present trials on Crown Research facility land. These include the AgResearch application that intends to genetically modify a number of animals with a range of genes including human genes and move these animals around the country to various farms. (See P3 &7)

**NZFSA review reveals gaping holes** Green Party PR 29.4.08 Dr. Stuart Slorach's review of the NZ Food Safety Authority published today shows systemic failure in the organisation, MP Sue Kedgley says "...reveal(ing) gaping holes in the way the NZFSA operates and assesses food safety risks."

"In particular, it highlights the secrecy surrounding the way the NZFSA operates, and its failure to adopt a precautionary approach to food safety,

security strategy that ensures that New Zealand can grow and produce and provide enough healthy affordable food for our whole population."



## **AGRESEARCH DODGY PLANS FOR WIDE SPREAD TRANSGENIC ANIMALS**

AgResearch and ERMA recently held a hui for iwi/hapu at the Flames International Hotel, Onerahi (Whangarei) to discuss AgResearch's plans to apply to ERMA for a wide ranging conditional release for transgenic animals (incl. cattle, deer and sheep). Representation from various Northland iwi/hapu raised serious concerns. Zelka Grammer of GE FREE NORTHLAND attended on behalf of Maori members (incl. Tai Tokerau Organic Primary Producers).

### **DRAFT ANNUAL PLANS 2008/9**

GE FREE NORTHLAND and other ratepayers have made submissions to the various Northland peninsula Draft Annual Plans. Submissions were made in support of Whangarei District Councils Draft Plan(WDC), thanking council for leadership shown on the critical GE issue and WDC's participation in an imminent collaborative community consultation on GE (together with Waitakere City, Rodney District, Kaipara District, and Far North District Councils.

All these councils, including WDC, budgeted \$10,000 for collaborative GE community consultation during the last financial year.

Submitters further urged council to make specific commitments to local regulation (or prohibition) of GMO land use.

Council was asked to set aside a sum of \$50,000 for a possible plan change for GMO land use during the next financial year (after collaborative community consultation on GE)

"Genetic Engineering Council has adopted a precautionary approach towards GMOs and has been lobbying government with regard to outstanding issues such as liability, economic costs and benefit, environmental risk and cultural effects. If the existing legislation is not amended the councils who are part of the Local Government Working Group, which includes all the councils north of Auckland and the Auckland Regional Council, will attempt to establish the necessary framework to manage the risk emanating from the use of GMOs by various methods." -P. 17 Whangarei

District Council Draft Annual Plan 2008/9

"Council will adopt a precautionary approach to the management of biotechnology in general and to GMO land uses in particular. It will continue to investigate ways of maintaining the district's environment free of GMOs until outstanding issues such as liability, economic costs, benefits, environmental risks, and cultural effects are resolved."

(Whangarei District Council adopted Long Term Council Community Plan 2006-16)

### **NEXT MEETING OF THE "INTER COUNCIL WORKING PARTY (ICWP) ON GMO RISK EVALUATION & OPTIONS"**

The ICWP on GMOs will be meeting in May 2008 to discuss important issues (including AgResearch plans to apply to ERMA for a wide ranging conditional release of transgenic animals) and get the work programme (which includes collaborative GE community consultation including a telephone poll) going. Member councils now include all councils from Auckland City Council/Auckland Regional Council north to Cape Reinga (Far North District Council). For more information & to receive the minutes of this important meeting or to obtain copy of various GE policy documents, please contact the Chairman/Coordinator of the ICWP on GMOs Dr. Kerry Grundy

c/o Whangarei District Council,  
Private Bag 9023, Whangarei,  
Northland) [kerryg@wdc.govt.nz](mailto:kerryg@wdc.govt.nz)  
09 430 4200 or toll free 0 800 932 463

Far North District Council is back on track with the GE issue, since the last Local Body Elections (during which a new Mayor was elected). Mayor Wayne Brown is keen to see the Memorandum of Understanding that FNDC has with GE FREE NORTHLAND honoured, and has replaced unqualified staff members (who were not dealing with the GE issue appropriately) with qualified planners with a far better grasp of the obligations of council and complexities of the interface between the HSNO Act, RMA and

Local Government Act 2002. Watch this space!

### **GE FREE NORTHLAND CLEARS ITS LEGAL BILL**

GE Free Northland recently received the a \$1,000 donation from a Kerikeri businessman, clearing its \$15,000 legal bill incurred in taking Far North District Council to the Environment Court. A combination of fundraisers (thanks to local musicians and artists) and a call for donations has resulted in our community group being back "in the black". **THANK YOU** to everyone who gave donations so that we can continue our work.

### **NEW GREENPEACE TRUEFOOD GUIDE**

The eagerly awaited 6th edition of the guide is now out, allowing Kiwi consumers the chance to check the food they're eating doesn't contain GE. The latest guide to avoiding GE ingredients has been extremely popular in Northland, distributed via GE FREE NORTHLAND to various organic shops, cafes and art galleries in the region.

#### **Download your own copy at**

[www.gefreefood.org.nz/downloads/GreenpeaceGEFreeFoodGuide08.pdf](http://www.gefreefood.org.nz/downloads/GreenpeaceGEFreeFoodGuide08.pdf)

Despite the fact that there are no commercial GE crops in NZ, as New Zealand law currently stands, GE ingredients can still find their way into our food chain through processed food. This means that when you buy food at supermarkets or dairies (or go out to eat, or pick up takeaways) you may not be aware that what they're eating contains GE ingredients.

You can also give your favourite cafe or takeaway a copy, lobbying them to support GE free brands (that usually don't cost anymore).

The Green "GE FREE section" continues to grow, reflecting a strong ongoing non-GE position from New Zealand food companies and an unprecedented anti-GE stance from Australasia's largest food company Goodman Fielder.

Late last year, Goodman Fielder (the umbrella company of such iconic brands as Edmonds, Meadow Lea and Irvines) spoke out publicly against GE food crops.

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 company's stance directly impact us.

Also, NZ is part of the Australian dominated Food Standards Australia NZ, which recently approved a GE "high-lysine" corn intended for animal feed. Despite the warnings of independent scientists and food safety experts that this corn may be toxic when heated and eaten, on 20<sup>th</sup> December it was approved by the NZ Food Safety Authority for importation and consumption into NZ for both animal and human food.

Though all New Zealand vegetables, fruit, quality meat and dairy products are 'GM-free', NZ Food Authorities have approved some thirty GE products for importation and use in food. Food Authorities do no tracking or independent testing, those with allergies, pregnant women, very young and elderly may be most at risk.

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

### Support Companies with a GE Free Policy

One of the best ways we can keep food supplies clear of GE ingredients is to support companies which are committed to a GE Free Policy.

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

**A new website has been set up to help companies and consumers:**  
[www.gefreepolicy.com](http://www.gefreepolicy.com)

### Prism Webcast News

The new technologies made available by the internet have opened up new

possibilities to provide an alternative focus on current news events from the mainstream media. Prism Webcast News is working to take advantage of these technologies to provide coverage of local and global environmental, sustainability, GE Free and human rights news.

Audio/podcast interviews with those involved in these issues in MP3 format can be listened to at:

[http://prismwebcastnews.com/pwn/?page\\_id=405](http://prismwebcastnews.com/pwn/?page_id=405)

Text news can be found at:

[www.prismwebcastnews.com/pwn/](http://www.prismwebcastnews.com/pwn/)

### 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 - 5602 covering a total 354,860.99 acres.

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

### Documentary on GE Trees

A Silent Forest: The Growing Threat, Genetically Engineered Trees', 45 min docu narrated by Dr. David Suzuki on **Available for purchase at**

[www.customflix.com/207574](http://www.customflix.com/207574).

[info@globaljusticeecolog](mailto:info@globaljusticeecolog)

### "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.

***The Ultimate War Crime*** reveals the truth about use of **depleted uranium** (DU) weapons in modern war zones. Most vulnerable are the children.

**Profits from the book will go towards medicines for Iraqi children.**

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

Please send cheque with book orders to R G & J Anderson Books, PO Box 8188, Cherrywood, Tauranga

Enquiries 64 7 576 5721 or [roberta@clear.net.nz](mailto:roberta@clear.net.nz).

**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.

### GE Free NZ Contacts

We're on the web, visit:

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

**Head office:** PO Box 693, Nelson

Ph 03 547 9383 Fax 03 547 9329

Email: [gefree@ts.co.nz](mailto:gefree@ts.co.nz) or

[info@gefree.co.nz](mailto:info@gefree.co.nz)

### Auckland GE-Free NZ,

[youcangetmeonline@yahoo.com](mailto:youcangetmeonline@yahoo.com)

### GE Aware Nelson GEAN

Susie Lees 03 543 2341

[gefree@ts.co.nz](mailto:gefree@ts.co.nz)

### GE Free Northland

Zelka Grammer 09 4322155

[zlg@xnet.co.nz](mailto:zlg@xnet.co.nz)

Sushila Ajani

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

### GE Free Wellington

Jon Muller 04 589 0536

[jon.muller@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jon.muller@xtra.co.nz)

### GE Free Taupo

Dawn Eskelsen

07 377 4563

### GE Free Wairarapa

Claire Bleakley 06 308 9842

[p.bleakley@orcon.net.nz](mailto:p.bleakley@orcon.net.nz)

### GE Free Palmerston North

Christine McArthur

[nztamaki@value.net.nz](mailto:nztamaki@value.net.nz)

### Press contacts:

Spokesperson

Jon Carapiet 09 815 3370

[youcangetmeonline@yahoo.com](mailto:youcangetmeonline@yahoo.com)

### Transgenic animal/health issues

Claire Bleakley 06 308 9842

[p.bleakley@orcon.net.nz](mailto:p.bleakley@orcon.net.nz)

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