GE Free New Zealand
In Food and Environment
Newsletter March 2013

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

2013…Time to speak up…Corporations & Governments worldwide team up to control food.

Longterm activist Ronnie Cummins said his 'New Year Revolution' for 2013 was 'to fight like hell' and certainly in the face of corporate entities and government working hand in hand to rape and pillage what remains of our clean green NZ, we have to join forces in the face of huge challenges.

As usual a raft of items that should have made the news were hidden by government and obscured by the fiasco of Christmas, as folk took to the streets searching firstly for a bargain and then for a well-deserved holiday with the family.

GE Salmon. An FDA dept (the Center for Veterinary Medicine) are aiming to approve GE Salmon (the first GE animal) as a 'New Animal Drug' which will allow it to be used as a human food with less safety testing, despite the FDA's own testing revealing an increased allergy risk..

TAKE ACTION: Tell FDA: NO!
salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/50865/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=9142

Dangerous GE crops are to be allowed to be grown in the states and federal courts will have no say. See Page 4

TPPA The threats of the TPPA are still shrouded in mystery since no detail of this secret trade agreement with countries around the Pacific and the USA will be released either before it is signed or for 4 years after.
The US, upset by our continued resistance to GE food and crops is doing everything possible to sneak it in by the backdoor.
Check out what is known about the TPPA from leaks, and educated guesswork at 'Itsourfuture.org'
We are still waiting to see if this agreement has already been upstaged at least with regard to Food safety by:

A deal brokered with the US see 13th Dec PR by Ministry of Primary Industries MPI stating that NZ is the first country to 'harmonize' our food safety laws with the US. Declared a victory by the Grocery Council. the devil will be in the detail which has'nt been released despite correspondence with the food safety authority.

On the 22nd Jan Kate Wilkinson was removed from cabinet so our new minister of food safety is Nikki Kaye in her 30s, with degrees in biotech and law. Lets hope the new information on viral genes in GE crops (See P2) will ensure that these foods will be withdrawn from the NZ food supply.

Dow are introducing 2,4-D crops. All safety and environmental risks associated with 2,4-D use beg the question—why approve 2,4-D ready corn? The answer: Dow expects to reap in $1.5 billion in extra profit in 2013 from 2,4-D resistant corn sales alone. FSANZ is the first Food Safety agency in the world to approve these crops. GE Free NZ have been trying without success to appeal 2-4D crop approvals via a tribunal, due to a lack of maximum residue levels and feeding studies. Told we have no jurisdiction to appeal GE Free NZ has asked for a review by government's Regulations Review Committee asking. See P7

GE Grasses and crops

Rolleston Fed Farmers biotech advocate in charge of government science funding is now promoting changes to the approval regime for GE crops. Citing the drought and future potential for similar weather events, he is pushing for GE grasses and crops despite no proof of success an good yields; saying GE regulations are too restrictive.

Reviews of **patent laws** show that GE crops are not the only seeds likely to be patented. A review of the EU laws has been shelved until September but look set to continue to allow patenting of seeds bred by marker assisted breeding (non GE) despite 70,000 signatures to a petition asking for no patents on lifeforms. Patent law is also up for review in NZ.

In the US Seminis, vegetable seed arm of Monsanto, is selling tomato seed with a label stating if the pack is opened the purchaser is under contract and cannot keep seed from plants grown, or trade them.

A recent US Supreme Court case involved a farmer who argued that biotech patents and technology fees should be 'exhausted' after a first sale looks like another win for Monsanto.
A report from the American Centre for Food Safety details US biotech ownership of seed and potential ways forward, and summarises the history and issues.
www.centerforfoodsafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Seed-Giants_final.pdf

New Minister Urged to Intervene After Viral Gene Found in GE crop.23.1.13 *www.gefree.org.nz*

GE Free NZ has asked the Minister of Food Safety, Nikki Kaye, to direct the Food Standards Authority (FSANZ) to halt its assessment of a GE soybean resistant to3 herbicides, RoundUp, glufosinate and 2,4-D.

"It is time FSANZ required rigorous long term feeding studies, assessing applications using independent published science rather than unpublished industry opinions," said Jon Carapiet, for GE-Free NZ
The latest scientific discovery of unexpected genetic elements in GE food crops already being sold highlights the flawed approval process for GE foods. The European Food Safety Authority has been alerted to the hidden viral gene that is a product of the GE process. **There are few studies to monitor the effects of GE food, no post-monitoring has ever been done and labelling of products is inadequate.**

A paper by Professor Seralini and colleagues reported serious deleterious effects including organ damage and tumour development in rats fed on GE corn that contained the CaMV 35S gene (Monsanto's NK603). (Sept 2012)

References: 1] Podevin N. and du Jardin P. (2012) Possible consequences of the overlap between the CaMV 35S promoter regions in plant transformation vectors used and the viral gene VI in transgenic plants *GM Crops and Food: Biotechnology in Agriculture & the Food Chain* Vol 3, Issue 4 P.296 – 300 *dx.doi.org/10.4161/gmcr.21406*
2] Regulators Discover a Hidden Viral Gene in Commercial GMO Crops Jan 21, 2013 Biotechnology, by Jonathan Latham and Allison Wilson *independentsciencenews.org/commentaries/regulators-discover-a-hidden-viral-gene-in-commercial-gmo-crops/*
3]Seralini. G-E., Clair. E., Mesnage. R., Gress. S., Defarge. N., Malatesta. M,. Hennequin. D. and de Vendomois. JS. (2012) Long term toxicity of a Roundup herbicide and Roundup-tolerant GM maize. Food and Chemical Toxicity. Vol: 50, (11) 4221–4231 *dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.fct.2012.08.005*

NZ food safety recognition by United States momentous 13.12.12
www.mpi.govt.nz/news-resources/news

This agreement covers all foods and animal feeds regulated by the FDA, which equates to $1.5 billion of New Zealand's current exports of primary products. Both NZ and the US aim to lessen potential regulatory burdens for foods traded and remove unnecessary duplication of activities.
Andrew McKenzie, former CEO of the NZ Food Safety Authority has worked on securing the deal for many years.

We need to know if the FDA deems a food safe, does New Zealand have to accept the ruling? Will we be forced to allow GE imports of novel GE foods? Will food safety be compromised to serve trade interests?

The deal hides a serious conflict of interest. US Deputy Commissioner of the FDA Michael Taylor, once a lawyer for Monsanto, signed the agreement with our representative Carol Barnao.

On his watch all Monsanto GE foods have been deemed safe regardless of the lack of safety data and concerns raised by independent scientists. Will this agreement make food safer, or limit NZ's capacity to differentiate our quality products on the world stage.

It will lessen regulatory burdens and remove unnecessary duplication thus resulting in savings for manufacturers. **This agreement is part of an overall strategy for strengthening the global food safety net through closer collaboration with regulators around the world**.

Seed Discovery Makes Increased Biosecurity and Scrutiny of Feed Vital (GE free NZ PR) 26.11.12

Compulsory biosecurity screening of all imported feed is needed to ensure protection of New Zealand's GE and disease free status. The need for urgent action was highlighted after Biosecurity NZ found viable GE seed in imported GE cotton-seed meal destined for animal feed.

Federated Farmers President Bruce Wills talks publicly about creating a good farming environment without regulation but with a strong emphasis on biosecurity but Federated Farmers maintain a cavalier attitude in their support of GE animal feed revealing a lack of understanding over the need to protect NZ agriculture and soils from dangers posed by GE imports. Pro-GE lobbyist Fed Farmers vice-president William Rolleston, lets farmers down by creating a warped view of clear market demand for safe GE-free food. Given the scientific evidence of serious health problems, both the safety of food and feed products is in question, when animals are fed GE feed.

"…the biosecurity concern is the issue of brand integrity and safe food reputation," says Jon Carapiet, spokesman for GE-free NZ.

Casting a shadow over dairy production are palm oil & GE feed, products of deforestation and chemical monocultures. In Argentina local people are suffering from increased health problems linked to RoundUp used on GE RR soy.

www.stuff.co.nz/southland-times/farming/8016829/Cottonseed-find-a-worry-for-farmers

Ministry for Primary Industries and biosecurity breaches.
A recent Auditor-General's report has identified weaknesses of readiness to deal with a biosecurity outbreak such as foot and mouth disease. The report says the ministry's planning is unrealistic and undeliverable. A biosecurity consultant for the World Bank, Roger Morris, believes **the ministry has shifted its emphasis from protecting New Zealand against threats in favour of focusing on building international trade.** Also of concern, there appears to have been no GE testing of maize silage and other maize crops in NZ for at least 2 seasons.

For years now the risks of GE in NZ have been obvious to many but we are still asking for local and regional government policy to protect community environments.

RMA changes Will they affect GE Free zones?

Recently Environment Minister Amy Adams launched a discussion paper for the next phase of the changes the National government want to make to the RMA. The four Principles that they want to remove from the RMA are these from Section 7, also they want to put the matters of National Importance and Other matters all in together with no ranking.

7 Other matters

..(aa) the ethic of stewardship
(c) the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values
(f) maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment:
(g) any finite characteristics of natural and physical resources.

Removal of any statement will be detrimental to the protection of our local environment.

Government intend to have powers for Ministers to instruct councils on what to include in plans.

Changes are also afoot to the HSNO Act early reports on the draft text show that some sections have been blacked out. What is government trying to hide?

It has become obvious from Fed Farmers Vice President Rolleston that they want to revisit regulations citing them as 'very restrictive'.

GE FREE ZONES IN NZ

We can still fight for GE Free Zones, the land and food that grows on it is our birthright. We must not allow it to be contaminated and our food crops contaminated by patented crops. Why should we end up paying for any accidents when there is no liability by companies who aim to make a profit.

Does your council have any policy in place?

1)Find out from your council.
To help persuade councils there are reports (the most recent 2012) and legal opinions available on Whangarei District Council's website.
GE Free NZ can forward precautionary and prohibitive satements that can be used by councils.
Council public consultation takes place regularly for council plans.
2) Make a submission asking council for a strong precautionary statement in policy. You can also ask them to make GMO use a prohibited activity.
Get together with others to raise awareness on the issue. Get as many people to make relevant submissions as you can. Letters to the editor are also helpful as are petitions will help show public opinion on the issues.

Recent news shows that the biotech industry in the guise of Federated Farmers as well as Crown Research Institutes; have been involved in lobbying councils.

A recent hijack by Federated Farmers resulted in an agreement by Auckland Regional council allowing for precautionary council policy to be rejected.
Federated Farmers were also keen to be involved in an attempt by Scion to overturn intended precautionary statements in Bay of Plenty policy.

This is still in mediation before the Environment Court.

Last December Albert-Eden Local Board passed a motion for a GE-Free Zone in continuation of the declaration made in 1999 by local communities including Waitakere, Western Bays, Waiheke, and Devonport. A survey of residents by Auckland council showed that two out of three Aucklanders support local government action to prohibit GMO release or at least want users of GMOs held liable for damage

25.3.13 **GE fungus escapes lab**

GM fungus Beauveria bassiana has been found outside of approved containment facilities at Lincoln University. Genetic modification of the fungus involved adding marker genes to indicate the presence of the strain in research plants and allow researchers to isolate the GM fungus from mixed fungal cultures.

26/02/2013 **Deal with Federated Farmers Opens Way for genetically modified organisms GMOs**

An agreement struck between Auckland Council and Federated Farmers to remove a statement prohibiting GMOs in the Hauraki Gulf Islands opens the way for release of GMOs under EPA general approval despite strong public opposition.

The new Auckland Council are complicit in a concerted campaign by industry to roll back environmental protection. The precautionary policy was developed by legacy councils, after widespread community opposition to GMOs, independent scientific advice for precaution, and policy advice warning that the EPA cannot adequately protect local and regional community interests from damage from GMOs.
Removal is in direct opposition to the recommendations of the inter-council working party (ICWP) on GMOs, of which Auckland Council is a member; which identified a plan change prohibiting release of GMOs as the most effective protection for the region.
Concern amongst residents of Waiheke and Great Barrier Island has been sidelined as they will be denied a say in the Unitary Plan consultation because it does not cover the Hauraki Gulf Islands. Despite the alarming loss of democracy, the draft Unitary Plan consultation is another chance for public to demand protection for the region and for future generations.

Protect Auckland Against Harm From Genetic Engineering / GMOs

The Unitary Plan must make it aprohibited activity to commercially release genetically modified organisms (GMO)
a) Users of GMOs should be held liable for damage they cause.
b) Council must adopt the precautionary approach as recommended by independent scientists (see www.psgr.org.nz)

How to make a submission:

ONLINE FORM: www.shapeauckland.co.nz/
EMAIL: unitaryplan@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz
MAIL: Unitary Plan Submissions, Private Bag 92300, Auckland 1142
FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/aklcouncil

Trade stance threatens farmers with cost of Biosecurity Insurance 26.11.12 GE Free NZ PR
Government policy prioritising free trade over bio-security could leave farmers facing hugely increased insurance costs to protect their capacity to meet export quality and safety standards.

Official US policy to allow biotech companies to cause widespread contamination of GM seed without liability, means farmers will be left to carry the costs of crop protection.

The USDA report on "Enhancing Co-existence" (1) states insurance as the solution for US farmers against GE contamination, acknowledging GE contamination will occur; but supports the power of Monsanto to litigate any farmer who saves seed accidentally contaminated with GE.

There is concern that the US could now promote this policy as part of the closed-door negotiations of the Trans Pacific Trade agreement (TPPA. This is a warning for NZ farmers and other TPPA countries, farmers must demand protection against the TPPA forcing costs onto farmers in the form of 'deregulation' of bio-security standards designed to benefit agribusiness and corporate interests.
US policy should not undermine our zero- tolerance for GE protecting our GE-free exports and reputation for food safety.
rt.com/usa/news/monsanto-insurance-ge-contamination-272/

In 2012 a French team at CRIIGEN found that lab rats fed GE maize tolerant to RoundUp, had seriously compromised immune systems, liver and kidneys, and increased incidence of tumours in four months. FSANZ and the Minister in charge of Public Health, dismissed Seralini's findings.

www.gefree.org.nz/reports-and-submissions/
Seralini. G-E.et al. (2012) Long term toxicity of a Roundup herbicide and a Roundup-tolerant GM maize. Food & Chemical Toxicity. Vol: 50, (11) 4221–4231
dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.fct.2012.08.005 A 1073

Argentina's bad seeds 14.3.13 Glenn Ellis - Al Jazeera (People & Power)
www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2013/03/20133131343414 2322.html
*The country's soya industry is booming, but what is the impact on Argentinians and their land?

For the past decade Argentina has seen a commodities-driven export boom, built largely on genetically-modified soy bean crops and the aggressive use of pesticides. Argentina's leaders say it has turned the country's economy around, others say the consequences are a dramatic surge in cancer rates, birth defects and land theft.

Monsanto Gets Its Way in Ag Bill 14.12. 2012 Jim Goodman, farmer.
www.commondreams.org/view/2012/12/14-1

"The Farmers Assurance Provision"is a rider, Section 733, inserted into the House of Representatives 2013 Agriculture Appropriations Bill.
The only assurance it provides is that Monsanto and the agriculture biotech industry will have carte blanche to force the government to allow the planting of their biotech seeds. The House Agriculture Committee's 2012 farm bill draft also includes three riders – Sections 1011, 10013 and 10014. These amendments would essentially destroy any oversight of new GE crops by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

If these riders had been in place during the review of GE alfalfa, Monsanto could have requested – or compelled – the Secretary of Agriculture to allow continued planting of GE alfalfa despite a federal court ruling that commercialization was illegal pending completion of an environmental impact study.

The riders prevent federal courts from restricting, in any way, the planting of GE crops, regardless of environmental, health or economic concerns, also dismissing any input from agencies, like the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Fish & Wildlife Service, & Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Peru has officially passed a law banning GMOs anywhere within the country for the next ten years
www.whitewolfpack.com/2012/11/peru-passes-monumental-ten-year-ban-on.html
In a massive blow to biotech corporations - Monsanto, Bayer, and Dow, Peru has officially passed a law banning GE ingredients anywhere within the country for a full decade before coming up for another review. They worry the introduction of GMOs will compromise the native species of Peru, such as the giant white corn, purple corn and, of course, the famous species of Peruvian potatoes. Anibal Huerta, President of Peru's Agrarian Commission, said the ban was needed to prevent the "danger that can arise from the use of biotechnology." The ban will curb the planting and importation of GMOs. 77 percent of supermarket products tested contain GM contaminants.
"There is an increasing consensus among consumers that they want safe, local, organic fresh food and that they want the environment and wildlife to be protected," states Walter Pengue, Buenos Aires University. "We must proceed with a broader evaluation of their original agricultural policies and practices using the precautionary principle."

EU under pressure from US and the World Trade Organisation to lift the ban on GE technology.
Current rules mean a crop approved at EU level can be grown anywhere in the Union unless countries have specific scientific reasons for blocking it.8 countries - Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg and Poland - have used this provision to stop GE technology. Mr Borg, new EU health commissioner, aims to drive forward rules that would shorten the approval process by giving countries the right to approve or ban GM varieties.

But three countries in the EU could stall the Borg initiative: France, Germany, and Britain. These countries see the plan as a breach of the single market and that for them is more important than GM.
www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-21294487

The GMO Seed Cartel 1.2.13
Ken Roseboro Non-GMO Report,
www.non-gmoreport.com/articles/february2013/the-gmo-seed-cartel.php
This is the first of a 2-part series

The introduction of GM crops has corresponded with increasing monopolization of seed by biotechnology companies and higher seed costs that have led to tragedies in some countries, while pushing out conventional, non-GMO seeds, and reducing farmer seed choices. These impacts are being seen in the United States, Brazil, India, the Philippines, and South Africa, and even Europe.

Seed monopoly
According to Philip Howard, a researcher at Michigan State University, economists say that when four firms control 40% of a market, it is no longer competitive. According to AgWeb, the "big four" biotech seed companies—Monsanto, DuPont/Pioneer Hi-Bred, Syngenta, and Dow AgroSciences—own 80% of the US corn market and 70% of the soybean business.

Monsanto has become the world's largest seed company in less than 10 years by capturing markets for corn, soybean, cotton, and vegetable seeds, according to a report by the Farmer to Farmer Campaign. In addition to selling seeds, Monsanto licenses its GM traits to other seed companies. As a result, more than 80% of US corn and more than 90% of soybeans planted each year contain Monsanto's patented GM traits.

Other factors that have led to industry domination by a few players include purchase of smaller seed companies by larger companies, weak antitrust law enforcement, and Supreme Court decisions that allowed GM crops and other plant materials to be patented, while prohibiting seed saving by farmers.

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) investigated Monsanto's dominance of the seed market after holding public meetings in 2010 where farmers described the company's practices. But at the end of 2012, DOJ announced it had "closed its investigation into possible anticompetitive practices in the seed industry."

Diana Moss, vice president of the American Antitrust Institute, told Mother Jones food blogger Tom Philpott, "To have a two-year investigation and close it without a peep in our view does a disservice."

Escalating GM seed prices
Another indication that the seed market has become monopolized is the escalating prices for GM seed. Moss points out that in competitive markets, technologies that enjoy widespread and rapid adoption—such as GM crops—typically experience steep declines in prices.

The opposite has occurred with GM crops. Charles Benbrook, research professor at the Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources, Washington State University, writes that from 2000 to 2010 as GM soybeans came to dominate the market, the price for seed increased 230%. The cost for Monsanto's Roundup Ready2 soybeans in 2010 was $70 per bag, a 143% increase in the price of GM seed since 2001.

According to the US Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, the average per-acre cost of soybean and corn seed increased 325% and 259%, respectively, between 1995 and 2011. This is roughly the time period when acreage of GM corn and soy grew from less than 20% to more than 80-90%

Moss says that the escalating prices for GM seeds are outstripping increases in grain prices earned by farmers, resulting in farmers being squeezed by higher costs with less returns.

Problems resulting from escalating prices for GM seed are seen most dramatically—and tragically—in developing countries. According to a study by Consumers International, an estimated 270,000 small-hold farmers in the Philippines are being forced to grow GM corn and ending up in debt. The cost of corn seeds has risen 282% from its introductory price and accounts for 18-21% of a farmer's total cost of production. Farmers are at the mercy of seed suppliers and lenders who are one and the same in the country and refuse to provide lending unless the farmers grow GM corn.

The impacts of high GM seed prices are even worse in India where more than 250,000 peasant farmers have committed suicide since 1998, or about one every 30 minutes. Indian farmers grow GM Bt cotton, which accounts for 95% of all cotton acres in the country. According to a report by the New York Times, the seeds can cost between 700 to 2,000 rupees ($38) per bag or about three to eight times the cost of conventional seeds. Similar to the situation in the Philippines, Indian farmers go into debt to buy the expensive GM seeds and pesticides. If their crops fail, many farmers kill themselves by drinking pesticides.

The suicides began before the introduction of GM cotton, but GM cotton has exacerbated the problem, according to an advisory from the Indian government, which stated, "Cotton farmers are in a deep crisis since shifting to Bt cotton. The spate of farmer suicides in 2011–12 has been particularly severe among Bt cotton farmers." A PBS documentary, "Seeds of Suicide," has also implicated expensive GM seeds and pesticides in the indebtedness and resulting suicides.

According to John Vandermeer, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Michigan, GM seeds are "destroying the lives of many farmers around the world right now."
(*Part 2 will focus on restricted availability of non-GMO seeds and reduced farmer choices in the US Europe, Brazil, and South Africa*)
References: see all at website
Philip Howard. "Visualizing Consolidation in the Global Seed Industry: 1996–2008." Sustainability 2009, 1(4), pg. 1266-1287.
Sara Shafer. "Behind the Seed Scene." AgWeb. July 28, 2012.
Kristina Hubbard, Farmer to Farmer Campaign on Genetic Engineering. "Out of Hand: Farmers Face the Consequences of a Consolidated Seed Industry." December 2009.

Hot potatoes! BASF drops GM spud plans in EU BBC News 2.2.13
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-21294487

Giant German chemical firm BASF is halting development of GM potato varieties in Europe. Approved in 2010 to grow a commercial GM potato called Amflora, modified to produce more of a type of starch that is useful for papermaking and other industrial processes.

Amflora potatoes struggled to gain market share and a year after approval, were only being grown on a two-hectare site in Germany. A year ago, BASF said it was moving its biotech headquarters to North Carolina halting commercialisation of GM products for the European market. GM maize is now the only crop approved for use in the EU.

GM food labelling comes into force amid fears over 'lack of planning'
On New Year's day, India joined a select band of countries where food containing GE content must be labelled. But it has done so without any preparation leaving consumer groups disappointed.

Government says "every package containing the genetically modified food shall bear at the top of its principal display panel the letters 'GM'.
NGOs are unsure how this rule will be implemented or applied to products with GM content that are being imported and how violators will be prosecuted.
www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2255769/GM-food-labelling-comes-force-activists-raise-fears-lack-planning.html#ixzz2GyTNrMAD

Monsanto - too cosy with the Food & Drugs Adminstration

U.S. trade deal a lot for Europe to swallow11.12.12
www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/11/us-usa-eu-trade-idUSBRE8BA05Y20121211
Will Europeans, baulking at U.S food imports, accept a US free trade agreement that opens the door for imports of GE crops? Both hoping to boost exports they are considering talks in 2013 on a free trade pact.
The US has been frustrated for years by what it considers the EU's "non-scientific" approach to food safety.
The EU has blocked imports of U.S. GE corn and soybeans, poultry treated with chlorine dioxide, beef treated with lactic acid to kill pathogens and pork produced from hogs fed ractopamine, which promotes lean meat growth.
The regulatory hurdles infuriate U.S. farmers, who see them as nothing other than veiled protectionism for European farmers. Peter Chase, vice president, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; said a U.S.-EU pact over time should help change attitudes in Europe toward GMOs.

Detection of genetically modified DNA sequences in milk from The Italian Market Int. J. Hyg. Environ.-Health 209 (2006) 81–88
Antonella Agodia, Martina Barchittaa, Agata Grillob, Salvatore Sciaccaca
Dept of Biomedical Sciences, University of Catania, Italy
Available on line *www.sciencedirect.com*
In this study DNA sequences from GE maize and GE soy were found in the milk of animals in Italy fed GE feed in particular. These were not degraded by pasteurization**,** although an alternative source of contamination in the natural environment can be suggested requiring further study.

2.1.13 Poland bans cultivation of GM maize, potatoes

Poland has imposed new bans on the cultivation of certain GE strains of maize ("MON 810", Monsanto GE maize) potatoes (BASF's Amflora), a day after the EU gave a green light for GM crops. The ban on specific strains uses a legal loophole to circumvent the EU's acceptance of such products.

Roundup harms beneficial gut bacteria – study 15.12.12
A new study by scientists at Leipzig University found that Roundup herbicide, based on glyphosate, negatively impacted gastrointestinal bacteria of poultry in vitro. Researchers found highly pathogenic bacteria resisted Roundup, whereas beneficial bacteria were moderately to highly susceptible to it.

The study provides a scientific basis to farmer reports of increased gastrointestinal disease in animals fed GM Roundup Ready soy, which is tolerant to Roundup.
http://gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14520:roundup-harms-beneficial-gut-bacteria-study
The effect of glyphosate on potential pathogens and beneficial members of poultry microbiota in vitro.9.12.12
Shehata, A. A., W. Schrodl, et al. (2012). Curr Microbiol.
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23224412

Video presentation by a Danish egg producer Claus Storgaard who found drastic improvements in the health and egg production of his hens after changing from GM to non-GM soy feed *("Changeover to non-GMO diet in egg production"): sustainablepulse.com/2012/12/15/monsanto-feels-pain-europe-roundup-herbicide-dangers/*

US farmers - poor global yields
Farmers Weekly 6.2.13
www.fwi.co.uk/articles/06/02/2013/137518/us-farmers-may-stop-planting-gms-after-poor-global-yields.htm
Some US farmers are considering returning to conventional seed after increased pest resistance and crop failures meant GM crops saw smaller yields globally than their non-GM counterparts. Paying about an extra $100 per acre for GM seed, many are questioning the benefits. While it was expected to be 40 years before resistance developed, pests such as corn rootworm have formed a resistance to GM crops in as few as 14 years.

The top performing countries by crop yield last year were in Asia, in particular China, where farmers do not use GM.

Double stranded RNA-Analysis

Professor Jack Heinemann, director of Canterbury Uni's Centre for Integrated Research in Biosafety, and colleagues, have critically examined several regulatory bodies and their assessment of GE organisms with a modification producing a molecule that can inhibit other genes (double stranded RNA; dsRNA).

The study, published in *Environmental International*, said "regulatory bodies are not adequately assessing the risks of dsRNA-producing GM products."

The authors advised a formal assessment procedure, involving multiple levels of bioinformatic, in vitro, animal and possibly human clinical assessments before approval could be granted in each individual case; also stating that, "changing the nature, kind and quantity of particular regulatory-RNA molecules through genetic engineering can create biosafety risks," and that the molecules can even withstand cooking and digestion.

Ministry Passes Buck to Disputes Committee On GE Food13/01/13
GE Free NZ PR

The Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) has advised GE-Free NZ to express concerns about how GE foods are scientifically assessed through the Regulatory Disputes Select Committee, thus sidestepping issues raised by GE Free NZ and Australian groups in a joint submission to FSANZ about an absence of evidence on the safety of Dow's multi-herbicide (2,4-D, Glyphosate, Glufosinate) tolerant GE soybean.

The Ministry is ignoring its responsibility for current serious failings in scientific assessment and ensuing decisions. 30,000 pages provided to GE Free NZ under the Official Information Act show evidence the new soybean contains lower levels of vital nutrients than the non-GE parent line and that the transgene was not destroyed even after cooking.

Scientists Warn on GE Food Safety Protocol (GE-Free NZ) 27.3.13

Food Standards (FSANZ) just notified the public they have received an application to assess a GE soy (A1081) that is resistant to glufosinate and atrazine type herbicides, for entry into the food chain. Despite appeals to stop, the Minister is also about to sign off on a genetically modified soybean (A1073) that has not met the minimal standards for scientific testing expected by consumers.
Professor Heinemann warns "our current understanding of dsRNA in GM plants is in its infancy and we are still trying to understand how they work and therefore how they may affect humans, animals and the environment".

"The Minister and FSANZ must take these incidents seriously and listen to the scientific warnings. The food chain faces the threat of chemicals that are banned in other countries and that are dangerous. 2,4-D and Atrazine sprays will become a lethal part of breakfast, lunch and dinner," said Claire Bleakley, from GE Free NZ. The scientific warning for a new safety protocol for novel GE foods is a reason to immediate halt further GE food applications.

There is also concern that GE soy, which comprises a major part of our animal feed imports, results in herbicide metabolites and transgenic genes being detected in their blood and organs. Recent reports found illness, death and serious reproductive disorders after animals were fed GE corn (XY335) in China.

A1081 – Food derived from Herbicide-tolerant Soybean Event
www.foodstandards.gov.au/foodstandards/applications/a1081foodderivedfrom5825.cfm

MPI Investigates GM Breach 19.3.13
parliament.newsroom.co.nz/stories/mpi-investigates-gm-breach-at-lincoln-university
The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is investigating how a GE

fungus was used outside approved containment facilities at Lincoln University.
Plant materials known to contain the modified fungus have been secured. MPI is now checking if any other materials may have been inadvertently exposed to the fungus. Inspectors put in place controls to prevent further breaches and are working on the investigation with the university and AgResearch.
"**It is unclear how the breach occurred. Further investigative work is being undertaken to determine this**," said Mr Smith MPI Deputy Director General

Non-GE crops producing high yields.
www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2013/feb/16/india-rice-farmers-revolution?CMP=twt_gu

FOOD, MADE FROM SCRATCH - Eric Hoffman **-**GeneWatch, Volume 26 Issue 1 Jan-Mar 2013 **Synthetic Biology - Extreme GE**
Synthetic biology describes a collection of new biotechnologies that push the limits of what is possible with "conventional" genetic engineering. Rather than moving one or two genes between different organisms, synthetic biology enables the writing and re-writing of genetic code on a computer, working with hundreds and thousands of DNA sequences at a time and even trying to reengineer entire biological systems. A moratorium on environmental release and commercial use of synthetic biology is necessary to ensure that our ability to assess its risks and regulate it to protect human health and the environment.

Localising Food Tour of the North Island

We live in times of increasing climate instability – floods, drought, earthquakes and hurricanes. We need to prepare for this and the rising cost of food, alongside tenuous food security.

The time to act is now. An upward trend in people interested in growing their own food shows this.

Empowering communities through Local Food Resilience

Our team from Earthcare Education Aotearoa will be giving talks **(including update on GE issues)**, workshops and documenting inspirational examples of innovative social food projects with the aim of creating educational videos to share.

For tour schedule see localisingfood.weebly.com

GM Contamination Register

www.gmcontaminationregister.org/index.php?content=default

This GM contamination register is the first of its kind in the world. Genetically modified crops were first commercially grown on a wide scale in 1996. A specific concern has been that once released, it would not be possible to contain or control these organisms yet still there is no global monitoring system.

The failure of national and international agencies, caused GeneWatch UK/ Greenpeace International to launch this joint initiative in 2005 to record all incidents of contamination arising from the intentional or accidental release of GMOs. It includes illegal plantings of GMOs and negative agricultural side-effects that have been reported.

The site includes information about, and links to, sources and the GeneWatch UK and Greenpeace web sites as well as other useful sites.

GE Free 2011 Foodguide from

www.truefood.org.au/truefoodguide

This Aussie GE Free Food guide is to help kids eat GE Free – and to help mums. Also good is to buy local organic produce and grow your own fruit and veg.

WHANGAREI DISTRICT COUNCIL
Media Release 14.3, 2013

Council brings control of outdoor use of genetically modified organisms a step closer

Introducing a robust, legal way for local government to manage the risks posed by outdoor use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is a step closer following a decision by Whangarei District Council's District Living Committee, to proceed with changes to its District Plan, drafted by the Inter Council Working Party on GMO Risk Evaluation and Management Options led by WDC Team Leader - Futures Planning, Dr Kerry Grundy .A study by the working party of Northland and Auckland councils provided eviden ce that outdoor use of GMOs poses significant environmental, economic and socio-cultural risks to communities and local government and could and should be controlled through councils' District Plans.

Whangarei District Council decided to approve this approach, once it had become clear what approach the Auckland Council (the largest Council represented on the working party) would be taking. The study, completed under section 32 of the Resource Management Act, justifies councils putting controls on outdoor uses of GMOs into their District Plans and states that the courts have supported a precautionary approach by councils.

Chairman of Whangarei District Council's District Living Committee Shelley Deeming said the decision was the result of ten years of effort between councils and the community.

"Our council acknowledges the important role that working cooperatively with other councils has played in the strength of this move. We have maximised our joint resources to assess risk in a systematic way and decide how to address them in a way that is workable. Under the Environmental Protection Agency there is currently no protection for anyone who is adversely affected by the introduction of GMOs or a system for compensating them if the use is in accord with an approval from that agency," Councilor Deeming said.

GE Free NZ Contacts

We're on the web, visit: and Facebook

www.gefree.org.nz
Head office: PO Box 693, Nelson
Ph 03 547 9383 Fax 03 547 9329
Email: *gefree@ts.co*.nz

Auckland GE-Free NZ,
Jon Carapiet
youcangetmeonline@yahoo.com

GE Aware Nelson GEAN
Susie Lees 03 543 2341
gefree@ts.co.nz

GE Free Northland
Zelka Grammer 09 4322155
linda.grammer@gmail.com
www.gefreenorthland.org.nz

GE Free Wellington
PO Box 13402, Wellington
Jon Muller 04 4774744
jon.muller1@clear.net.nz

GE Free Hawkes Bay
Peter Volker, Adrian White
peter.volker@clear.net.nz
adrian.white@xtra.co.nz

GE Free Rotorua
Martin Sharp
martinsharp@free.net.nz

GE Free Wairarapa
Claire Bleakley 06 308 9842
p.bleakley@orcon.net.nz

Press contacts: Spokesperson
Jon Carapiet 09 815 3370
youcangetmeonline@yahoo.com

Transgenic animal/health issues
Claire Bleakley 06 308 9842
p.bleakley@orcon.net.nz

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