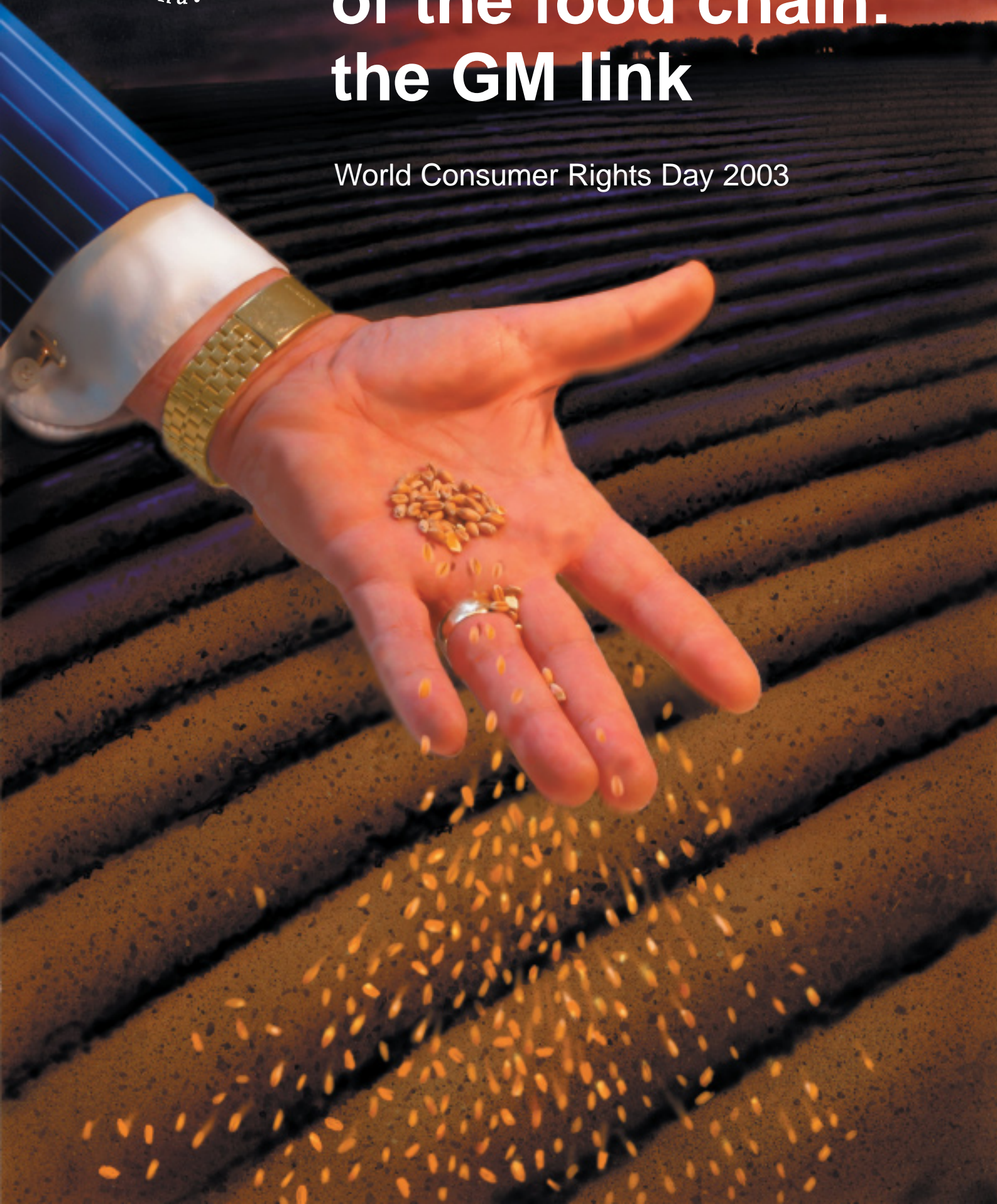




Corporate control of the food chain: the GM link

World Consumer Rights Day 2003



World Consumer Rights Day

World Consumer Rights Day was first observed on 15 March 1983, and has since become an important occasion for mobilising citizen action. Consumer organisations around the world use materials produced by Consumers International to generate local initiatives and media coverage for their work over the coming year. Recent themes promoted by CI for WCRD include: consumer representation (2002), corporate accountability (2001), genetically modified foods (2000), assessment of consumer rights (1999), poverty alleviation (1998) and sustainable consumption (1997).

The eight basic rights celebrated by World Consumer Rights Day are:

- Satisfaction of basic needs
- Safety
- Information
- Choice
- Representation
- Redress
- Consumer education
- A healthy environment

Corporate control of the food chain: the GM link

World Consumer Rights Day 2003



Acknowledgements

‘Corporate control of the food chain: the GM link’ was produced by Consumers International for use by members and others for World Consumer Rights Day, 15 March 2003, and beyond.

Consumers International does not necessarily subscribe to the views stated in the various documents from other NGOs and sources cited in this publication.

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www.consumersinternational.org

French version:

Mainmise des grandes entreprises sur la chaîne alimentaire : la filière OGM

Spanish version:

Control corporativo de la cadena de alimentos: la conexión transgénica

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Introduction

"Our Food, Whose Choice?" was the question Consumers International asked three years ago, when World Consumer Rights Day 2000 took its first look at genetically modified foods. This year, we return to the issue, which remains high on the agenda for national consumer action and for regional and international campaigning initiatives. Many safety and environmental questions remain unanswered, but we now also look beyond these to the ways that corporations are using GM technology to consolidate their control over global food production.

This kit – "Corporate control of the food chain: the GM link," – has been produced by Consumers International for World Consumer Rights Day 2003 to assert the principle that consumer rights come before profits and corporate control in determining what food we eat.

Of the eight fundamental consumer rights, the following four are especially applicable to the issues addressed in this kit:

The right to safety: Consumers must be protected against products, production processes and services that are hazardous to their health.

The right to be informed: Consumers need the facts to make informed choices. The absence of adequate labelling infringes this consumer right.

The right to choose: Consumers should be able to select from a range of products in accordance with their beliefs and preferences.

The right to a healthy and sustainable environment: The well-being of present and future generations is a consumer right that can best be protected by respect for the precautionary principle where potentially hazardous environmental impacts are concerned.

These rights form the basis of the policies campaigned for by Consumers International on genetically modified foods. CI's positions on food safety and food security can be seen in the **Statement on page 59** from its 16th World Congress (held in Durban in 2000). Our work since then has concentrated particularly on negotiations within the Codex Alimentarius Commission to establish an internationally-agreed pre-market safety assessment regime, and mandatory international rules for labelling. Progress, albeit slow, is being made on both these fronts – primarily on labelling and especially at the national level, as more and more governments are introducing their own labelling requirements in the continued absence of an international (Codex) agreement.

However, Consumers International has also campaigned strongly to prevent the spread of GM foods, since effective safety testing is not being done. Most recently, these efforts have been directed at working with members and governments in Africa on policies toward offers of GM food aid.

As evidence from practical experience with GM crops becomes more substantial, it is increasingly clear that those currently being grown offer no benefits to consumers and nothing to most farmers. Even the intended 'indirect' advantages of reduced pesticide and herbicide use are not being achieved. The only beneficiaries are the agrochemical corporations that sell the seeds and associated farm chemicals.

GM is a new technology that poses many ethical, environmental and biological questions which cannot be fully answered even by a well-designed safety testing regime.

Consumers have a right to question why this technology should be used at all when it produces no benefits to society but has the potential for causing great damage.

Louise Sylvan
President
Consumers International

How to use this kit

This kit aims to introduce CI members and the general public to the issues around genetic engineering of foods by looking at the larger debate over corporate control – from the production of these crops to the labelling of genetically modified foods.

Each section presents an overview of ways in which major corporate interests are using current developments in science and international trade to consolidate control over the food chain. At the end of each section, we provide suggestions and resources for consumer groups (and others) to use in organising their own campaigns.

The campaigning ideas are organised as follows:

Questions to ask: These leading questions are intended to help readers find out more about the extent and impact of GM crops and foods in their countries. Questions may be directed at government, business or regulatory authorities. Members may choose to pursue one or all of the questions, depending on their level of interest.

Campaign ideas: These present suggested campaign targets and strategic actions for groups and individuals. A full menu of ways to network, investigate, survey and lobby, both in the halls of power and on the streets.

Resources/Links: Make use of the links listed in these sections and throughout the text to assist you in your campaigning activities.

- You will note that throughout the campaign section there will be links to the 'TOOLKIT' which you will find at the end of the kit.
- The TOOLKIT contains useful resources to assist you in your activities such as an IDEAS FOR ACTION page which reviews many of the public advocacy strategies being used by activist groups; MODEL LETTERS which can be adapted to your needs; a CALENDAR OF EVENTS to provide you with targets for your lobbying activities; and USEFUL WEBSITES.
- Adapt and translate these materials as best fits your needs. Report back to Consumers International on the ways you've put this material to use and the results you've obtained. We invite you to share your materials with us and to join CI in helping its members around the world to take a stand for World Consumer Rights on March 15... and beyond. Send copies of World Consumer Rights Day 2003 news and events to your regional office and to CI's Global Publications officer (lshallat@consint.cl) for inclusion in CI's 'World Consumer' electronic newsletter, posting on the CI website and exchange among CI members worldwide.
- The kit can either be printed out and used as a reference tool in hard copy, or it can be read and used in soft copy (i.e. on your computer screen). The benefits of working on soft copy is that it allows you to click directly to the website links. It also allows you to use the links to jump from one section of the kit to the other, for example, to the model letters contained in the Toolkit.
- For further information on CI's work in GM foods, please contact your CI regional food officer (listed below). For additional information on World Consumer Rights Day 2003, contact your CI regional communications officer (listed below).

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Office for Developed and Transition Economies

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Overview – the GM link

Concern about genetic modification (GM) food technology – transferring genes between species that do not interbreed – has tended to focus on safety issues, specifically about whether GM crops are safe for people's health and the environment.

While these remain the key issues, they are closely related to the role of agribusiness transnational corporations (TNCs) behind GM technology. Corporations have sought to reassure consumers that genetically modified organisms are safe and will allow more choice. They do not say that if GM technology develops in the way they plan, the food chain would be effectively padlocked, with the corporations holding the key.

The food chain is a long one and corporations play a dominate role along its entire length. Private companies and public sector crop breeders research and test new seed. In the case of private companies, it is likely that they will patent the seed and release it to farmers to produce food from it. After production, the food may be processed locally before being traded. Importers, brokers and merchants may then pass the food to processors in importing countries, in the case of unprocessed foods, or directly to wholesalers and retailers. Finally the food reaches the all-important link in the chain, the consumer.

Apart from the retailer and the consumer, the agribusiness TNCs already have considerable control over the food chain. They are using GM foods to consolidate that control through patents and other property rights on seeds, and through perhaps their deadliest weapon of all – the contamination of non-GM crops.

Industry claims have to be seen in the context of the control they exercise. It may, for example, be possible to engineer crops which fix their own nitrogen, eliminating the need for nitrogen fertilisers and offering the prospect of higher yields. But it will likely be a biotech company that

develops any such crops that conducts the research on side-effects, and that patents and sells the seed, thus deepening the cycle of dependency.

Consumers have seen no benefits from GM technology and successful opposition is mounting. Consumers in Japan, for example, have halted the development of a herbicide-tolerant GM rice, promoted by Monsanto. GM tomatoes and GM tobacco, the first GM crops to be commercialised, have failed to win market acceptance and have been effectively abandoned. GM potatoes were withdrawn from the US market in 2001 after a series of market rejections.

GM flax seed was taken off the market in 2001 under pressure from the Flax Council of Canada and the Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission because European customers, who buy 60 per cent of Canada's flax, said they did not want it. Aventis has backed off from commercialising a herbicide resistant GM rice, largely because of warnings that it would be rejected by buyers.

Technologies emerge from time to time that may at sight seem useful but are in fact dangerous. Genetic modification is such a technology. Corporate control of the food chain, with the added GM link, poses a serious threat to farmers and consumers the world over.

There is an urgent need to publicise the issues. The position of the National Farmers Union in Canada would seem to have world-wide application: 'The NFU believes that all Canadians – farmers and non-farmers alike – must engage in an informed debate on the genetic modification of food. Citizens must examine GM food in the largest possible social,

historical, environmental, economic and ethical context. After that debate, citizens – not the corporations that promote these products – must decide whether to accept or reject GM food’.

This kit contains five sections that address the different aspects of the GM debate.

These are:

1 **Food production and distribution** looks at corporate control over agriculture through GM technologies and intellectual property rights regimes such as patents or plant breeders rights.

Food aid looks at how food aid is being used as an instrument to introduce GM crops into developing countries.

2 **Labelling and traceability** looks at how comprehensive labelling of GM foods and ingredients is being resisted by industry despite being essential for consumer choice.

3 **Regulatory regimes** looks at how GM crops are being regulated.

4 **What’s next?** looks at some of the latest GM technologies being pushed by the biotechnology industry, such as GM wheat, nutraceuticals, and ‘pharm’ products.

5 **Frequently told lies** looks at the claims made by biotech industry and contests them!

6 **GM food safety and impacts on human health** summarises what is known – and what’s not – about the potential risks to human health of GM food.

We hope this material will inspire CI members and others to take action.

Happy reading.

Food production and distribution

The section examines the companies behind GM foods, the countries where the crops are grown, and the patent and intellectual property right regimes that regulate ownership. It also highlights the crucial issue of contamination.

GM crops are currently grown in a small number of countries, with the technology concentrated on four major crops. Two crops – soya and maize – account for 82 per cent of the GM crop acreage. Together with cotton and canola, they cover nearly all the land under GM crops.

The global area under GM crops increased from 1.7 million hectares in 1996 to 52.6 million hectares in 2001, according to the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications. About 90 per cent of the crops are planted in two countries – the United States and Argentina. Together with Canada and China, they account for 99 per cent of GM crop acreage.

Two countries account for most of the remaining 1 per cent of GM acreage – South Africa, with 0.2m. hectares of combined GM maize, soya and cotton, and Australia with 0.2m. hectares of cotton. Six countries therefore account for almost all GM crop acreage.

Ownership of GM crop technology is mostly concentrated in the hands of one company, Monsanto. The products of Monsanto accounted for 91 per cent of the total area sown to GM crops in 2001. Three companies account for virtually 100 per cent of the GM crops that are commercially grown – Monsanto, Syngenta (formerly Novartis/AstraZeneca) and Aventis CropScience.

Most GM crops – 77 per cent – are bred for herbicide tolerance. Other traits are insect resistance (15 per cent) and combined herbicide

tolerance and insect resistance (8 per cent). These three traits amount for virtually 100 per cent of commercially grown GM crops.

The companies are desperate to expand GM technology into more countries (and crops), otherwise the foods will have limited markets and they will not be selling the seeds and pesticides/herbicides in sufficient quantities to pay for their huge research and development and marketing costs. Regularly repeated misinformation about GM crops is part of a sophisticated marketing programme to extend their sales.

Seeds

In the mid-1980s, there were 7,000 seed sources worldwide, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, and markets were highly diversified. By 1998, the number had fallen to 1,500, with 24 of them accounting for half the commercial seed market. This concentration of the market has come about largely because of the acquisition of local seed companies by TNCs that were gearing up to promote GM seeds.

Today's seed industry is an arm of the biotech industry. The world's largest seed companies are now either owned by GM companies, such as DuPont's Pioneer Seeds, or are themselves GM companies, such as Monsanto and Syngenta.

In 2002, Syngenta tried but failed to privatise an important collection of rice seed in India. Syngenta

was forced to withdraw from the takeover of the collection after the Indian Council of Agricultural Research forced the Indira Gandhi Agricultural University to pull out of a controversial collaboration effort.

Intellectual property rights and patents on seeds

Over 40 years ago, an international convention was agreed by governments of Western countries giving intellectual property rights (IPRs) to plant breeders for plant varieties improved through human intervention. IPRs have become a powerful tool to enhance corporate control over the food chain. During the 1980s, companies began to apply for patents on crops. Originally designed for industrial innovation, patents give the holder an intellectual property right in the form of an exclusive right to exploit an invention for up to 20 years.

The International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) gives breeders the right to collect royalties from their seeds. Fifty-one countries are members of the convention – mostly European countries – but developing countries are coming under pressure to join.

Breeders – usually companies – have bred and claimed IPRs on plants they have developed, sometimes by taking plants without charge from developing countries and then registering modest variations on them. By giving extensive rights to plant breeders, UPOV threatens the rights of farmers, discounts their contribution in breeding and preserving plant varieties over generations, and allows TNCs to monopolise the seed industries. It restricts the right of farmers to save, grow and sell seed, and makes seed more expensive because royalties have to be paid to breeders.

Patents on life forms are hugely controversial. The United Nations 1999 Human Development Report said that the patent system is leading to the 'silent theft of centuries of knowledge from developing countries'.

Figures demonstrate the role of a small number of powerful corporations. Seventy-four per cent of biotechnology patents are held by six TNCs –

Monsanto with 287, DuPont, 279, Syngenta, 173, Dow, 157, Aventis, 77, and Grupo Pulsar, 38.¹

Between them, the six corporations therefore hold 1011 patents on food crops, including important staples such as maize, rice, sorghum and soybean. The concentration is greater than it appears. Monsanto and DuPont, the two largest holders of biotech patents, cooperate closely by sharing their biotechnologies.

The companies have worked through the US government to pressure countries to open their markets to GM maize and soya. Brazil, for example, yielded to Monsanto's demands and liberated trading of GM soyabean. The Brazilian Government ignored environmental laws in this process. Pakistan was forced to lift a GM seed ban in order to try to control the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) entering on the black market.

TRIPS

A number of international agreements give rights to plant breeders through the patent system. The World Trade Organisation's Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights agreement (TRIPS) grants corporations the right to protect their patents in all member countries of the WTO – currently 145. The agreement's Article 27.3(b) provides comprehensive rules for intellectual property rights related to international trade.

The TRIPS agreement came into force in 1995; until then, patents were a matter for national policy. The agreement was primarily drafted with corporate interests in mind; it has serious consequences for small farmers.

Farmers who grow crops that have been patented may have to pay royalties to the patent holder, perhaps thousands of miles away, for the right to plant them. They may be denied the right to save patented or protected seeds for their subsequent planting and will have to buy seeds afresh for each season.

Refusing to buy patented seed does not free farmers from this dilemma. If GM seed from a neighbour's field pollute their crops, it can leave farmers having to pay royalties on the GM crops

found in their fields – even though they did not choose to plant them.

The TRIPS agreement allows member countries of the WTO to set up alternative intellectual property protection instead of patents – a so-called *sui generis* system. The Indian PVP (Plant Varieties Protection Act) is a *sui generis* system; it provides an exception to plant breeders rights by specifically providing for farmers rights to use, sell and exchange seed.

The Organisation for African Unity has put forward proposals for *sui generis* IPR protection of plant varieties. But the US and EU want any *sui generis* legislation to be based on UPOV.

Selling seeds

GM seeds are often sold in the framework of contracts which generally preclude seed-saving by farmers. Some biotech companies have taken action against producers who attempt to save seeds, on the basis of 'infringement of intellectual property rights' as Monsanto has claimed. Saving seeds for further sowings is a long-established tradition; a quarter of soybean seeds, for example, are estimated to be farm-saved.

Biotech firms have developed genetically modified crops which themselves produce sterile seeds that cannot be saved and planted the following season. These 'Technology Protection Systems' (called 'terminator technology' by critics) oblige farmers to buy fresh seed each season and has been condemned by civil society, scientific bodies and many governments as a threat to food security and as an immoral application of agricultural biotechnology.

Monsanto and Syngenta said they would not commercialise terminator technology after widespread public opposition. But they have not kept their word. Instead, they have been refining the technology. Syngenta filed a Terminator patent application in September 2001 and DuPont was granted a Terminator patent in October 2001.

Contamination

Contamination of non-GM crops by GM crops is occurring at a serious rate and is irreversible. In

September 2001, Mexico's Ministry of Environment reported that extensive GM maize contamination had been found in farmers' maize varieties, with up to 35 per cent of non-GM maize polluted.

In Canada, University of Manitoba researchers found that some bags of conventional certified canola seed contained more than 5 per cent of GM, with almost none free of GM contamination.

Lessons from Canada, where non-GM canola has been contaminated by GM canola 4 kilometres away, show that GM contamination cannot be contained. Wheat farmers in North Dakota (US) who live almost 50 miles from the nearest GM canola say that the canola is a pest in their wheat fields. Separation distances expected to prevent genetic pollution have proved 'hopelessly inadequate', according to a Greenpeace report.

Contamination can happen during breeding, propagation and processing of seeds. Probably more ruinously, it can be spread by the wind.

As fire spreads when blown by the wind, so pollen from GM crops can be blown onto the fields of farmers who do not want them. The GM genes that contaminate are patented and therefore make all crops containing these genes the property of the corporations which hold these patents. Farmers end up paying for something they did not want and which threatens their crops.

The biotech industry has suggested that Terminator technology be used to control contamination, but this would still make farmers dependent on the companies. It is up to industry to find solutions to the problems that GM contamination is causing.²

Through trading to consumer

Corporations further dominate the food chain through trading and processing. Exporting GM crops is essential for US farmers. A third of US maize is genetically modified and much of it is destined for export. US-based Cargill, the world's largest food trader, describes itself as 'an international marketer, processor and distributor of agricultural, food, financial and industrial products and services, with 97,000 employees in 59 countries'. Internationally traded food is likely

to pass through the hands of Cargill and other transnational trading companies. Cargill is also a leading producer of tropical corn seed and germplasm, with significant sales in the Latin American, Asian and African markets.

In 1998, Monsanto purchased Cargill's international seed operations in Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa. The acquisition includes seed research, production and testing facilities in 24 countries and sales and distribution operations in 51 countries. Cargill's international seed businesses specialise in the development and marketing of crops such as maize, sunflower and rapeseed seeds, soybean, sorghum, wheat and hybrid rice seed.

'The potential for our existing biotechnology traits outside North America is roughly double the acreage potential within North America', says former Monsanto President Hendrik A. Verfaillie. 'The Cargill international seed businesses give us quicker access to these global markets. We can accelerate commercialisation through established distribution channels that will bring these and our future agronomic and quality traits to more farmers around the world in the varieties they want to grow'.

One of the activities of Monsanto and Cargill was the formation of a company called Renessen, described as a biotechnology joint venture which aims 'to develop new grains and oilseeds'. In addition, Cargill has entered a merger with Continental grain, one of the four major grain elevators in the US.

The weakest links in the food chain, as far as the corporations are concerned, are retailers and consumers. Since TNCs cannot force retailers to stock their products, corporations are now moving into food retailing. Wal-Mart, for example, the world's 4th largest company, has bought Asda, one of the UK's largest food retailers. In developing countries, most food retailing remains diffuse.

The most important link of all is consumers. It is they who ultimately make or break corporate dreams, who judge whether or not to buy GM foods. It is consumers in Europe who have seen through the corporate claims and who have been

successful in changing the policies of retailers by refusing to buy GM foods.

But there are nonetheless dangers. Their dominance over the food chain is such that TNCs may be able to restrict the foods coming into retail shops and thereby exercise control over what consumers buy. Should that happen, corporate control of the food chain would be complete.

Take action on...

1.1 Patents and Intellectual Property Rights

Questions to ask ???

What laws exist in your country with respect to plant variety protection (PVP)? Do these protect the rights of farmers to save, use and exchange seeds of plant varieties? Does the law allow for patents on life forms? Is the law based on the UPOV model?

Is your government applying to become a member of UPOV? Is your government committed to join UPOV under any agreement with foreign governments? Could your government adopt something that gives better protection to consumers? *For further information on which countries are members of UPOV, see: www.grain.org/publications/pvp-south-upov-en.cfm*

What companies, universities, agricultural development institutes, etc. are conducting GM research in your country? Who is underwriting this research? Who "owns" the results and who will profit from it?

Campaign ideas !!!

Plant Variety Protection and UPOV:

Call on your government to develop a national *sui generis* law on plant variety protection not based on UPOV.

Draw your government's attention to the existence of *sui generis* laws on plant variety protection, such as the Organization for African Unity model law for Protection of the Rights of Local Communities, Farmers and Breeders, and for the Regulation of Access to Biological Resources. *See: www.grain.org/publications/oau-en.cfm*

In countries that have already adopted the UPOV model, organise workshops/seminars/press conferences which make public the implications of UPOV for farmers' rights. Lobby your government to ensure that farmers' rights are protected. See CI's media briefing 'Why We Oppose UPOV': www.consumersinternational.org/documents.asp/ViewADocument.asp?regid=135&ID=491&categoryid=461&langID=1

See also: Paper on Farmers' Rights in the 'Campaign' section of the CI Office for Asia Pacific food site: www.ciroap.org/food/ (click on 'Background Information Note').

Track UPOV in your country. UPOV organises seminars in developing countries to influence national governments and the public. Present alternative views using press releases, public lectures, etc.

TRIPS:

Lobby your government to take a strong stand for "No Patents on Life Forms" in the review of Section 27(3)(b) of TRIPS at the TRIPS Council in the World Trade Organisation see: *For dates of TRIPS council meetings, see: www.wto.org/english/news_e/meets.pdf*

Lobby your government to give precedence to international treaty commitments, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, over the WTO TRIPS agreement. *See: www.grain.org/publications/issue1-en.cfm*

Resources/Links **www.**

Plant Varieties Protection and UPOV:

CI media briefing on UPOV (Geneva, October 2002)

www.consumersinternational.org/documents_asp/searchdocument.asp?DocID=491®ionid=135&angid=1

"No Patents on Life Forms" Campaign

Consumers International Office for Asia-Pacific

www.ciroap.org/food (go to 'campaign' section)

Gene Campaign

www.genecampaign.org/

Genetics Resources Action International (Grain)

www.grain.org

Ten Reasons Not to Join UPOV

www.grain.org/publications/issue2-en.cfm

Beyond UPOV

www.grain.org/publications/dsp_publications.cfm?type_id=20&typetype=3

International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV)

www.upov.int/

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources in Food and Agriculture

www.fao.org/ag/cgrfa/itpgr.htm

Convention on Biological Diversity

www.biodiv.org

Consumers International Office for Africa biotechnology page

www.consumersinternational.org/documents_asp/ViewACategory_levelBelowOnly.asp?regid=152&CategoryID=334&langID=1

TRIPS:

AP Consumer, Issue No 29 (3/2002) "Feeding the World"

www.consumersinternational.org/publications

The Jan-March 2003 issue will report on the "No Patents on Life Forms" campaign

Action Aid

www.actionaid.org

Action Aid Crops and Robbers Report

www.actionaid.org/ourpriorities/foodrights/car/car.shtml

Action Aid Food Rights Campaign

www.actionaid.org/policyandresearch/foodrights/pbr.shtml

WTO/TRIPS Council

www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/intel6_e.htm

TRIPS versus Biodiversity

www.grain.org/publications/dsp_publications.cfm?type_id=20&type_type=3

Take action on...

1.2 Production and development of GM crops

Questions to ask ???

Are soy, corn (maize), canola, potato or cotton grown in your country? Are GM varieties being planted?

Are other GM crops or GM seeds grown in your country, either for domestic use and consumption and/or for export?

Is your government accepting or providing aid money that is being used to fund research into GM crops?

Campaign ideas !!!

Propose an immediate moratorium on the commercialisation of GM crops, in accordance with the precautionary principle, pending the introduction of an agreed international safety testing regime, tracing system, and full labelling. Ask your government to tell you what their policy is on the safety assessments they require before they allow GM food to be grown or sold in your country.

Publicise alternative sources of GM-free seeds, as in this list from Crop Choice. www.CropChoice.Com/

Monitor local field trials of GM crops and publicise where these are taking place and whether the company has sought the necessary permission from the relevant regulatory authorities.

Promote consumption of local foods, in conjunction with supermarkets, health and organic food stores, farmers' markets, restaurant associations, schools and cafeterias, etc.

Resources/Links WWW.

CI Office for Asia-Pacific Food Security Website

www.ciroap.org/food/ (go to section on Biotechnology for further information on labelling)

UNIDO Biosafety Information Network and Advisory Service

<http://binas.unido.org/binas/regs.php3>

"Value of Consuming Indigenous Foods in Africa"

CI Office for Africa Biotechnology page

www.consumersinternational.org/documents.asp/ViewACategory_levelBelowOnly.asp?regid=152&CategoryID=334&langID=1

Take action on...

1.3 Corporate control

Questions to ask ???

Which biotechnology or agrochemical companies sell seeds, pesticides and other agricultural inputs in your country?

continues on next page

Are multinational companies selling food with GM ingredients in your country that they could not sell elsewhere? *see:* <http://archive.greenpeace.org/~geneng/>

Do Aventis (producer of StarLink), Monsanto (Roundup Ready) and Dupont/Pioneer (producer of Bt crops) do business in your country? Do they own local affiliates, suppliers, etc.?

Through what channels do biotech/agribusiness interests exercise influence over national policies related to GM crops and foods?

Do industry representatives participate in advisory and governmental committees, commissions, delegations, etc.? What is the balance between industry and consumer representation?

Do legislators and regulators have links, as shareholders, board members or funding recipients, to national subsidiaries of GM-producing multinational seed and agrochemical corporations?

What public disclosure mechanisms exist to monitor the activities (financial, field-based and commercial) of these companies?

What effects have international and/or bilateral trade agreements had on the activities of multinational biotech and agribusiness corporations in your region?

Campaign ideas !!!

Investigate the lobbying activities, publicly and behind closed doors, of biotech industry representatives regarding the national and international regulation of GM food. Visit company headquarters and demand responses to your concerns, as did representatives of the "No! GMO Campaign," of Japan seeking assurances of compliance from Monsanto, following a Dec. 2002 decision by local authorities to halt development of GM rice. *Contact:* no-gmo@jca.apc.org

Resources/Links **www.**

Corporate Citizenship in the Global Market

World Consumer Rights Day 2001

<http://cioldlive.test.poptel.org.uk/wcrd/secthree/index.html>

Tracking the Biotech Industry

www.greenpeaceusa.org/ge/industry.htm#monsanto

Corporate Watch

www.corpwatch.org/

Biotech Industry Organization

www.bio.org/

Ag Biotech Countdown: Vital Statistics and GM Crops

www.etcgroup.org

CI Office for Africa Biotechnology page

www.consumersinternational.org/documents.asp/ViewACategory_levelBelowOnly.asp?regid=152&CategoryID=334&langID=1

Using hunger to promote GM food

Food aid containing GM corn and soya has been likened to the legendary Trojan Horse — an ostensible good will gesture that stealthily opens the door to a questionable incursion.

Hunger in Southern Africa, and Zambia's highly publicised refusal to accept donations of GM maize, have focused the world's attention on the grey areas where humanitarian interests and commercial ones converge.

But the fact is that GM foods have been shipped unlabelled to developing country recipients since 1996, in UN World Food Programme (WFP) aid to India, Colombia, Guatemala and many African countries. The US, which provides the bulk of the emergency food distributed around the world, offers commodity shipments in which GM and non-GM grains are mixed. In the case of maize, this has included StarLink, a GM corn variety approved in the US for animal feed, not human consumption.

While the Zambian government's stance has won it non-GM emergency food supplies, other needy countries in Southern Africa are relying on it. Severe drought in Ethiopia threatens to exacerbate the problem, and polarise the debate, even further.

Some African nations, including Zimbabwe, are willing to take GM food aid in milled form rather than seeds, thus preventing the potential threat of out-crossing to local crops. But USAID and WFP, the main suppliers of food aid (along with the EU), say that milling is too expensive and could delay relief efforts. All major donors except USAID maintain that the most effective form of aid is to provide cash for countries to buy their own food, not aid in the form of surplus grains from donor countries like the US.

In Brazil, IDEC and other activist groups are urging President Luiz Inacio ("Lula") da Silva to resist US pressure to relax a ban on GM crops in return for food aid. They see strings attached to a US offer, following lobbying by Monsanto, to support Lula's "Zero Hunger" campaign in exchange for greater access to Brazil's protected market. USAID food donations to Nicaragua,

Bolivia and Guatemala have tested positive for StarLink and other varieties of genetically engineered corn.

In Colombia, testing conducted by Consumidores Colombia forced the withdrawal of donated GM soya from national food aid programmes aimed at young children. Ecuador halted imports of World Food Programme aid for poor children in 2001 after the children held protests outside the WFP offices. Bosnia rejected GM food aid by the US in January 2001. In the Philippines, nation's main farmers union, the KMP, protested that the US was dumping unsellable GM food on the country via the WFP. Cyclone-hit Orissa, India was the unknowing recipient of unlabelled GM food aid from the US in 2000. (More incidents are detailed in "Force-Feeding the World" at: <http://members.tripod.com/~ngin/020902b.htm>)

In the view of the development agency Oxfam, food aid has historically been used to dump surpluses and create food dependency. Critics of the US Food for Peace programme note that even the US Department of Agriculture describes it as a 'concessional sales program to promote exports of US agricultural commodities.'

In some respects, the dumping of unsellable food surpluses parallels the dumping of inappropriate and expired drugs through humanitarian aid programmes. The international community has adopted voluntary guidelines to 'protect' recipient nations from abuses in food aid (the 1999 Food Aid Convention) and drug donations (WHO Guidelines for Drug Donations)

The situation in Argentina, in the throes of financial collapse and sudden food shortages, is especially complex. Much of the soya produced in Argentina is exported, and nearly all of it is genetically modified. 'Argentines use soya for animal feed, not for their tables. But without the

money to buy beef, desperate hungry people are happy to buy up the local GM soya that now floods the local market,' reports Corporate Watch www.corporatewatch.org/newsletter/issue11/issue11_part10.htm

Grain traders are donating 1 of every 1000 tonnes of Argentine soya as food aid through a domestic aid programme called Plan Soja Solidaria. 'This soya aid is everywhere, in homeless shelters and soup kitchens,' writes Corporate Watch. 'Monsanto is essentially being paid to distribute its soya – which it can't find a market for in Europe – to the poor of Argentina. As the staple diet of milk and meat is being replaced by soya, aid agencies are having to send out recipes telling people how to cook it.'

The irony of this, the report concludes, is the fact that 'many Argentines... see genetically engineered soya as their salvation. Soya animal feed is one of Argentina's main exports. With the major presence of Monsanto, the Argentine people have to dig hard for information about the health and environmental risks of GM crops and the worldwide rejection of GM technology. This isolation also impedes debate on a key underlying issue: if Argentina does not want to repeat the cycle of debt and structural adjustment imposed on it by the IMF, it must break free from the corporations that are exporting its wealth and destroying its economy. A more sustainable agriculture that invests in the long-term health of the environment must form part of the solution.'

Take action on...

1.4 GM food aid

Questions to ask ???

Does your country receive some sort of food aid? From what sources?

Has your country formally and publicly stated that it does not want GM food aid?

Has this food aid been tested for GM content?

Does your country have the capacity to test for GMO content? If yes, who is responsible for the testing? Is it government, industry or an independent body?

What Prior Informed Consent (PIC) mechanisms are in place to screen incoming aid?

What are the underlying causes of food scarcity in your country?

Campaign ideas !!!

Work with aid agencies to identify alternative non-GM sources of food aid.

See: www.greenpeace.org/reports/?campaign_id=3994

Work with small farmer groups and others to identify root causes of food shortages in your country.

Work with donors and aid agencies to promote a Best Practice policy of cash support for the UN World Food Programme (WFP) that would allow it to buy grain from the quickest and most cost-effective sources rather than administering surplus grain from donors such as USAID.

Support the global campaign against GM food aid to southern Africa.

See statement: The Right to Resist GM Food Aid

www.falkor.org/news/USAID.html

Lobby USAID to "delink" emergency food assistance from delivery of surplus GM food by providing funds for purchase of non-GM food. www.usaid.gov/regions/afr/

Resources/Links **www.**

Grain says 'No' to GM Food Aid

www.grain.org/updates/dsp_updates.cfm?update_id=2E90A275-F900-4901-AEEDD431E33329EE

Via Campesina

<http://ns.rds.org.hk/via/>

CI Office for Asia-Pacific

Food Security and Safety Website

www.ciroap.org/food

Food First

www.foodfirst.org/media/press/2002/fallbackgrounder.html

Food Security Net

www.foodsecurity.net/

Test food aid for the presence of GM contaminants.

Friends of the Earth

www.foe.org/foodaid/

Listen to What Zambians Have to Say about Hunger and Food Scarcity

Video by Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre

www.jesuits.ca/works/kasisi.htm

Greenpeace report on USAID and GM Food Aid

www.greenpeace.org.uk/MultimediaFiles/Live/FullReport/5243.pdf

Greenpeace report on Food Aid in Southern Africa

www.greenpeace.org/reports/?campaign_id=3994

FAO Food Aid Convention

www.fao.org/Legal/rtf/fac99-e.htm

Letter from CI to the World Food Programme: Respect Zambia's Decision

www.consumersinternational.org/documents.asp/ViewADocument.asp?regid=135&ID=503&categoryid=463&langID=1

UN World Food Program

www.wfp.org/index2.html

CI Office for Africa Biotechnology page

www.consumersinternational.org/documents.asp/ViewACategory_levelBelowOnly.asp?regid=152&CategoryID=334&langID=1

2

Labelling and traceability

Mandatory labelling and traceability of GM foods and ingredients give consumers vital information about prospective purchases and are essential for choice.

Consumers have the right to know which foods contain GM ingredients. Labels provide information that enables choice to be made, whether these are based on safety or other concerns about the cultural or environmental impact of GM foods. The biotechnology corporations would prefer that consumers do not have that information. They oppose labelling because they claim that GM foods are basically no different from non-GM foods.

'If you put a label on genetically engineered food, you might as well put a skull and crossbones on it', admitted a spokesman of one Monsanto subsidiary.

The United States does not require GM food to be labelled, although this position is being challenged. Australia, New Zealand and Japan require products containing GM material to be labelled. Canada has a voluntary scheme. In Africa, Zimbabwe and South Africa are currently working on a labelling scheme for GM.

European Union

It is in the European Union (EU) where most activity on labelling GM foods and ingredients is taking place. More than 35 countries have followed the EU's lead and developed some form of labelling requirement for genetically modified foods.

The EU already requires GM food to be labelled, but the system is too loose to cover more than a small proportion of foods with GM derived

ingredients. And while GM ingredients destined directly for human consumption need labelling, no legislation governs the identification of GM ingredients in animal feed.

Between 1998 and 2002, the European Parliament voted to tighten the regulations. In late November 2002, EU Agriculture Ministers agreed upon a labelling system under which GM derivatives of any kind will have to be clearly identified on a food product. EU Environment Ministers also agreed to traceability rules. The agreements, which still have to be approved by the EU's 15 member states, require labels on GM foods that contain 0.9 per cent or more of 'authorised GMO material'. This refers to foods authorised before the start of a moratorium that the EU has imposed on new GM foods since 1998.

For newer foods, those that currently do not have authorisation, and are not yet marketed in the EU, labelling would be required if they contain 0.5 per cent or more of GM ingredients. This tolerance level of 0.5 per cent only applies for three years; the 0.9 per cent threshold then applies.

The requirement would cover the labelling of all foods produced from GMOs, irrespective of whether there is DNA or protein of GM origin in the final product. Products such as oil derived from GM oilseed rape which currently do not have to be labelled (because there is no modified material in the oil itself) will have to be labelled under the new regulation. GM animal feed is also covered for the first time.

The EU's proposed labelling system is a defeat for the biotech industry which, if it is forced to accept labelling, has argued strongly for a 5 per cent 'threshold' Mandatory labelling with a low threshold is good news for consumers.

But a threshold of 0.9 per cent is not low enough. Food may still contain 0.9 per cent of GM ingredients without being labelled. This would mean, for example, that in a bag of 110 potatoes, one could be GM.

CI considers that, although the lead taken by the EU is valuable, its proposed thresholds for GM ingredients are too high. Labelling should apply to any detectable GM material. Currently detection technology can pick up contamination down to perhaps 0.1 per cent. This kind of level should be the basis of labelling.

One problem to be addressed is the need to protect organic farmers who discover tiny traces of GMOs in their harvests. A zero threshold would require them to label their products even though contamination of their crops may have been completely beyond their control.

The EU's moratorium on new GM foods remains in place until agreement on labelling and traceability has been reached by EU member states. There will probably not be before the end of 2003 at the earliest. The US may challenge the moratorium at the World Trade Organisation, claiming that it is a restraint on trade.

United States

The idea of a tolerance level of a 0.1 per cent level in GM foods was floated in an initiative in Oregon in November 2002. This would have mandated that labels appear on any food produced, sold or distributed in the state that contained 0.1 per cent of GM ingredients. With opinion polls in Oregon showing public support for GM food labelling, biotech companies spent some US \$6 million on advertising to defeat the initiative, warning of significant losses for the industry if it was passed. It was heavily defeated.

Following the Republican Party take-over of the US Senate, the biotech industry's views are likely to have an even more sympathetic hearing. This is

despite a Rutgers University and ABC News poll in 2001 which found that 90 per cent of American consumers support GM labelling. Polls also show that two-thirds of US believe that Europeans have a right to require labelling of GM foods, even if US food exports are reduced.

Some US states, California for example, require mandatory warnings if certain ingredients (such as sodium nitrate in meats) are present in food at certain levels. The biotech industry wants to get a nation-wide labelling uniformity law passed to counteract such state laws. This would push labelling of GM products even further away.

Africa, Asia, Latin America

Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan have mandatory labelling or some form of labelling requirement. Thailand drew up proposals for labelling but the US threatened to impose trade sanctions if the proposals were approved. They were dropped.

European-style labelling regimes are being considered in Israel, Egypt and Mexico. In South Africa, one of the few developing countries where GM food is distributed, labels are not required on the food. There is a danger that GM foods will cross into neighbouring countries opposed to them. The consumer movement in South Africa plans to lobby regional economic groupings and the African Union to put pressure on South Africa to label all GM food.

Positive and negative labelling

Legislators in countries considering labelling of GM foods need to make it positive – that foods containing or made from genetically modified material should be labelled. Industry has promoted the use of negative labelling, so that non-GM goods could be labelled 'without genetic engineering' or similar. This means making farmers and food businesses which produce conventional crops and foods responsible for proving that they do not contain GM material. But their products are what consumers recognise as normal. Consumers have long demonstrated their confidence in food without GM ingredients. Asking the conventional food industry to justify

itself in relation to GM – including introducing tracing systems to show that its products are GM free – is completely wrong. It is the GM industry which consumers have expressed concern about and it must be its responsibility to label its products.

Labels need to specify the amounts of GM ingredients and give the trade name, name and address of the producer or intermediaries, registration number (if available), product composition, direction and precautions for use, lot identification and manufacturing date and 'use before' or expiry date. This information allows the products to be traced to a particular source.

Traceability

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) defines traceability as the 'ability to trace the history, application or location of an entity by means of recorded identifications'.

Traceability in the 21st century is increasingly important as production methods become more complex and as food travels further across the globe. Mandatory traceability can help to ensure food safety and effective product recall, monitor developments in the food chain, facilitate informed consumer choices, and ensure that consumers are not misled. It can help to bridge the gaps between farmer, food retailer and consumer. When diseases such as BSE or an e. coli outbreak occur, traceability is vital.

Legislation on the mandatory traceability of GM ingredients in food is essential, but most countries have not yet developed rules. In December 2002, traceability took a step forward when EU Environmental Ministers agreed that companies must pass on information about the GMOs contained in foods. Traceability will be ensured through a 'unique identification code' that will be assigned to each GMO.

When a company markets a product containing GMOs, it will have to ensure that the buyer in the EU receives the information that the product contains GMOs and the identification codes. The buyer is then obliged to pass this information to clients. EU member states will consider this in 2003.

Traceability rules should apply to GM ingredients throughout the entire production, processing and distribution chain. Tracing systems for feeding materials and feed additives in GM foods would facilitate identification and monitoring of unintended or long-term effects on human or animal health and on the environment.

Governments should ensure mandatory traceability regulations for adoption by industry. An international system for record keeping and traceability should be established where the information is reportable and accessible, with records kept for at least five years.

CI expects tracing systems to be permitted under the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. This applies to all measures implemented to protect human, animal and plant life or health which might also affect international trade. The WTO seeks to outlaw Technical Barriers to Trade (measures introduced by a country under the guise of a national requirement but actually designed to protect a national market or producer). A requirement that food must be traceable clearly has public safety as its objective and therefore should not contravene TBT rules.

Traceability is also important in relation to the issue of liability for damage caused by GM crops. The UK-based Soil Association has warned that UK law provides no protection for farmers affected by GM contamination. CI believes that GM food companies should be held accountable for GM contamination.

Take action on...

2.1 Labelling and traceability

Questions to ask ???

What positions do local producers, supermarkets, restaurants and other retailers hold on GM foods in general and on labelling their products and informing consumers on GM foods?

Which local retailers source and sell GM-free foods? How do they inform consumers?

What is the status of GM and non-GM food labelling laws in your country? What norms and regulatory bodies determine these?

What position does your government take at the Codex Committee on Food Labelling? Is industry represented on national delegations to Codex? Are consumers?

Does your country have legislation that makes biotech companies liable for any hazardous effects of their GM technology?

Campaign ideas !!!

Lobby your government for mandatory, positive labelling and traceability of GM ingredients.

See letter on page 53.

Call for a moratorium on GM foods, pending full pre-market evaluation and social, safety and environmental impact assessments of these foods and crops.

Call on your government to pass a law which ensures that GM food companies are held accountable for any hazardous effects of their GM technology, including contamination, loss of income to farmers as a result of bad crops, and health, environmental and socio-economic hazards related to the technology.

Lobby your government to support proposals for labelling of GM foods being considered at the next meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL). Write to your national representative to the next CCFL and demand mandatory labelling of GM foods **See letter on page 53.** The next CCFL meeting takes place in Ottawa, Canada beginning April 28, 2003, so please send letters before that date. *For further information, contact Nita Pillai, CI Food Co-ordinator: npillai@consint.org*

Test foods for GM content and publicise the results to government and the media.

Friends of the Earth booklet on GMO Contamination and Protocol for Testing

www.foe.org/camps/comm/safefood/gefood/foodaid/testing_protocol_2-2.pdf

Gather evidence of consumer support for regulation and labelling of GM foods through surveys, etc, and present to media, government and industry.

Resources/Links **www.**

Consumer attitudes to genetically modified foods

Australian Consumers' Association www.choice.com.au/articles/a103328

Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue reports on EU/US progress on labelling www.tacd.org

Consumers Union Guide to Environmental Labels www.eco-labels.org

Campaign to Label Genetically Engineered Foods www.thecampaign.org

CI's Comments on paper from Codex Committee Food Labelling www.consumersinternational.org/documents.asp/ViewACategory_levelBelow_Only.asp?regid=135&CategoryID=697&langID=1

CI document: Why We Need Labelling of Genetically Engineered Food

www.consumersinternational.org/documents.asp/ViewACategory_levelBelow_Only.asp?regid=135&CategoryID=463&langID=1

Codex Alimentarius Commission www.codexalimentarius.net/

Regulatory regimes

The national legislation of a number of countries includes regulatory regimes for GM foods. But some regimes are inadequate and the commitments of governments to implementation is not always strong. Biotech corporations have a great deal of money to spend to influence regulation.

Transnational corporations are a dominant part of the global economy, yet many of their actions lack accountability and transparency. No binding international regulation of the corporations exist, although calls for regulation are growing. TNCs 'need to be brought within a frame of global governance, not just a patchwork of national laws, rules and regulations', says the 1999 Human Development Report of the United Nations.

'Never in human history has a comparatively small number of private corporations wielded so much power... The power of the TNCs needs to be brought under democratic control', recommends the UK-based aid agency Christian Aid.

A corporate accountability convention has been proposed by Friends of the Earth. It envisages that such a treaty would levy duties on TNCs to take account of social and environmental concerns and enshrine, in international law, and the right of people to seek redress from the corporations.

The declaration of ministers at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in August/September 2002, says that action is needed 'to actively promote corporate responsibility and accountability... through the full development and effective implementation of intergovernmental agreements and measures, international initiatives and public-private partnerships, appropriate national regulations, and continuous improvement in corporate practices in all countries'.

Corporate responsibility and accountability is urgently needed over GM foods. International regulation of the GM food industry is not helped by the difference of opinion about GM between the United States and most of the rest of the world. Despite this, an international agreement was reached in January 2000 on a protocol which seeks to 'protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology'. The protocol – the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety – is part of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It establishes an advance informed agreement procedure for ensuring that countries are provided with the information necessary to make informed decisions 'before agreeing to the import of such organisms into their territory', and contains reference to a precautionary approach.

Two years later, the protocol had 25 ratifications, including the European Union. The US was not among them.

Labelling laws on GM foods allowing consumers their right to choose can only be achieved if specific regulations are agreed and implemented. It is difficult to control or regulate any form of risk assessment and risk management of GM foods without proper testing methods and expertise. In Asia and the Pacific region, some countries have formed regulatory bodies to oversee production, labelling and marketing of GMOs. Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand have established pre-market

safety assessments for GMOs. While individual governments have set regulations, their commitment to implementing these regulations remains to be seen.

Regulatory regimes

Argentina: The Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food is responsible for the analysis of applications to plant GMOs and monitoring of field trials. Authorizations are based on the recommendations of CONABIA, the National Advisory Committee on Agricultural Biotechnology, 'a multidisciplinary and inter-institutional group whose members are representatives of the public and private sectors working in agricultural biotechnology'. Industry therefore helps to make the recommendations.

The rules developed by CONABIA are based 'on the characteristics and risks posed by biotechnology products, and not on the process by which these products are produced'. The rules establish the requirements to apply for a permit for the release of GMOs into the environment. Analysis of applications are on case-by-case basis and are part of the Argentine regulatory system for the agricultural sector.

Brazil: A Biosafety Law, passed in 1994, grants authority over GMOs to a National Technical Biosafety Commission made up of representatives of several federal ministries, government-named 'independent' scientists and industry (currently represented by Syngenta). The law gives the environment and health ministries final power to authorise any activities involving GMOs, from research to release, but eight years later these two agencies are only beginning to prepare to take on their authority in this area. Brazil's 1990 Consumer Defense Code also calls for labelling of all products to inform final consumers of relevant characteristics they have a right to know about.

China: After the release of GM crops, all varieties must undergo a regular testing and registration process. The Ministry of Agriculture issued Regulations on Safety of Genetically Modified Organisms which came into effect in March 2002. The rules require that GMOs entering China for research, production or processing receive safety certificates from the Ministry ensuring safety for

people, animals and the environment. Imports lacking safety certificates are returned or destroyed. All GM soybeans, rapeseed, cottonseed and tomatoes are labelled as GM products.

India: The Department of Biotechnology, which promotes the development of a national biotech capacity, is also regulating the technology. Safety guidelines set out the procedure for field-testing GM plants, with regulations including minimum 'isolation' distance from non-GM crops.

European Union: A 1990 directive on the Voluntary Release of Genetically Modified Organisms sets out rules governing the research and testing of GMOs and the procedures for putting them on the market. Companies wishing to test GMOs must apply to the relevant authority in an EU member state.

Consumer organisations in Europe criticised the directive because it did not take into account the broader impact of GM crops grown and GM products consumed. Neither does it contain a provision for the long-term monitoring of the health and environmental impact of GM crops, or fully acknowledge the potential for side-effects. In July 2000, the European Commission proposed a revision of the directive to fill in the gaps in existing legislation.

Another major piece of EU legislation governing GM foods is the 1997 Novel Foods Regulation. This covers GMOs intended for use in food in EU member countries; it lays down requirements for their safety, nutritional content and the information to be provided to consumers, including labelling.

The European Commission is also working to amend its Seed Directives, specifically to regulate the presence of GMOs in conventional seeds.

The United States: A regulatory vacuum exists. Despite the growing body of scientific evidence of potential environmental and human health risks of GM foods, the US regulatory system continues to give the technology a free ride. GM foods come under three agencies – the US Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration. US legislators have not passed a regulatory statute that deals with the threats posed by GM foods. No

attempt is made to assess the impact on human health of GM crops when planted. There is no toxicity testing requirement to ensure the crops are safe to people, and no regulations in place to cope with potential environmental disasters.

The US biotech industry is anticipating several regulatory initiatives, on biopharming for example. Politically powerful US trade groups are lobbying federal regulators for tougher rules for biopharming firms.

Only a few countries have regulations on the processing of GM foods and these are not always consistent.

Influence

Biotech corporations are trying to influence the shape of regulation of GM foods. Industry has lobbied governments to ensure that clauses making them liable for the hazardous effects of their crops are removed from national legislation.

In October 2002, Syngenta sponsored a workshop in India on GM rice which devised proposals it hopes will serve as 'a guideline for biotechnology regulators in developing and developed countries'.

The recommendations were said to be based on scientific data available 'with focus on socio-economic aspects called for appropriate regulatory supervision to be an inherent part of the release procedures'. Enhanced transparency and a participatory approach to regulate commercialisation of GM plant varieties were among the recommendations. The workshop proposed organic farming with inputs from modern biotechnology as the best way to help small farmers.

It recommended that the release of GM rice should be avoided in areas identified as being the source or origin of rice varieties. Syngenta has described its approach to GM crop regulation as one of 'latch lifting' – trying to find creative means with which to undermine the resistance to approval of its products. (See: www.gmriceworkshop.com)

In some cases it is the corporate 'front guy', the US government, that threatens action against a developing country that wants to regulate GMOs. In May 2000, Sri Lanka banned GM imports for a year because of the untested nature of GM foods. It renewed the ban in May 2001 after the discovery of imported chocolates, oils and soups containing GMOs. Within 10 days, the US began to use the WTO to threaten sanctions. As a result, the new import ban was postponed until September 2001; Sri Lanka then surrendered to US threats.

Similar sanctions threats have been issued by the US against Canada (in response to plans to introduce labelling), the European Union (for labelling GM food and for regulating GM crops) and against China and Mexico.

In Pakistan, a Plant Breeders Rights Act is currently being drafted. Partly due to the efforts of civil society, a clause was incorporated to impose penalties on breeders if there was any loss to farmers because of plant variety protection. Pressure by Monsanto led to the clause being removed from the draft.

Trade

Better information about origin and production processes are not trade barriers. Rather they are a way to create fair markets in developed countries for products from developing countries. Regulation on traceability would be consistent with the World Trade Organisation's Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement which applies to all measures implemented to protect human, animal and plant life or health that might affect international trade.

Take action on...

3.1 Regulatory regimes

Questions to ask ???

What safety and nutritional standards cover GM foods and how are they implemented? What legal or administrative mechanisms exist to monitor compliance and register complaints?

What government agencies are responsible for approving field trials, commercial planting, product approvals, etc?

Is your government facing international pressure or sanctions as a result of domestic regulations (or efforts to regulate) GM foodstuffs?

Campaign ideas !!!

Lobby your government to support regional initiatives on the introduction and/or harmonisation of regulatory frameworks on biosafety.

Lobby your government to support the adoption of standards for the safety assessment of GM foods which will protect consumer health, be discussed at the Codex Alimentarius meeting in Japan in 10-14 March 2003. *For further information, contact Nita Pillai. CI's Food Co-ordinator: npillai@consint.org*

Lobby for increased consumer representation in national food regulatory bodies.

Monitor regulations/field trials/commercial field planting/product approvals. See UNIDO Biosafety Information Network and Advisory Service <http://binas.unido.org/binas/regs.php3>

Survey consumer attitudes and use the results to lobby your government, food producers/retailers on their GM policy. Publicise this in the media.

Resources/Links WWW.

European Commission Health and Consumer Protection Directorate General
www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm

Regulations on Genetically Modified Organisms in Asia-Pacific countries
Food Security and Safety Website
CI Office for Asia-Pacific
www.ciroap.org/food

CI Office for Africa Biotechnology page
www.consumersinternational.org/documents.asp/ViewACategory_levelBelowOnly.asp?regid=152&CategoryID=334&langID=1

African Model Law on Biotechnology
www.africabio.com/policies/MODEL%20LAW%20ON%20BIOSAFETY_ff.htm

3.2 Biosafety

Questions to ask ???

Has your country signed the Biosafety Protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity? If so, has it been ratified?

If your country has ratified the Biosafety Protocol, what legislation for implementation is in place?

What are the laws governing field testing and cultivation of GMOs in your country?

What environmental impact studies are required before GMOs can be field tested and commercialised?

Does the government keep track of all GMO releases?

If GM crops are planted in your country, what research is being done to monitor their impact on related plant varieties, wild relatives, insects, soil quality and other ecological factors?

Campaign ideas !!!

Press for maximum standards in the development of national biosafety legislation in countries where none exists.

Circulate a 'Save our seeds!' petition like the one presented to the European Union as it deliberated the stricter GM standard adopted in 2002. www.saveourseeds.org/

Hold a public hearing to air testimonies from local farmers of how GM crops can threaten their livelihoods, like the Citizens' Juries organised in Brazil and India.

www.actionaid.org/ourpriorities/foodrights/gmtechnology/gmtechnology.shtml

Use mechanisms for environmental impact assessment to force a moratorium on the development of GM crops (as did Brazil's IDEC) <http://server.digipronto.com.br/idec.org.br/>

Resources/Links www.

Biosafety Protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity www.biodiv.org/biosafety/

Testimonies of GM contamination from North American farmers www.iatp.org/

Seeds of Doubt: North American farmers' experiences of GM crops

www.soilassociation.org

GMO Liability Threats for Farmers: Legal Issues Surrounding the Planting of GM Crops www.iatp.org/

Lulea Initiative on Biosafety and Consumer Rights (1999)

www.konsumentssamverkan.se/11verk/kampanj/gentekn/konf/luleainitativ.html

CI Office for Africa update on Biosafety Regulation Regimes in Africa (2003) [www.consumersinternational.org/documents asp/ViewADocument.asp?regid=152&ID=589&categoryid=334&langID=1](http://www.consumersinternational.org/documents.asp/ViewADocument.asp?regid=152&ID=589&categoryid=334&langID=1)

CI Office for Africa Progress report on biosafety status of African countries

www.consumersinternational.org/documents asp/ViewADocument.asp?regid=152&ID=590&categoryid=334&langID=1

CI Office for Africa Biotechnology page

www.consumersinternational.org/documents asp/ViewACategory_levelBelowOnly.asp?regid=152&CategoryID=334&langID=1

What's next?

The biotech industry has big plans for future GM products. This section looks at three of them – GM wheat, nutraceuticals and 'pharm' products.

Agribusiness corporations are working, often in secret, to develop little-known products. GM wheat, nutraceuticals and 'pharm' products are among them.

GM wheat

Developed by Monsanto, genetically modified wheat is now out of the laboratory and into test plots. In December 2002, Monsanto applied for permission to plant GM wheat in Canada and the US, and has announced a 2004-2005 date for introduction of GM wheat there. However, Monsanto has also stated that it will only market the wheat if it can first gain acceptance from buyers, as well as environmental and health clearance from regulatory authorities.

The new wheat strain, which is resistant to Monsanto's Round-Up herbicide, is already highly controversial among US and Canadian farmers. Not only are farmers sceptical of the promised agronomic benefits, they are concerned about the inevitable loss of their multi-billion dollar export market.

The National Farmers' Union of Canada and the Canadian Wheat Board have expressed in the strongest terms their concerns that GM wheat will damage exports. In a letter to Canada's Prime Minister, over 300 industry associations, local governments, citizen groups, experts and researchers said: 'We represent diverse constituencies and interests, but we are unified in asking that you act immediately to prevent the introduction of GM wheat into Canadian food and fields unless the concerns of Canadian farmers,

industry, and consumers are addressed adequately.' The opposition has come despite alleged financial inducements by Monsanto to farm leaders to accept GM wheat.

In the US, farm representatives in North Dakota and Montana have sought legislation restricting GM wheat production, saying that their customers would not accept GM wheat.

The reaction of importing countries is critical for North American farmers. In August 2002, Italy's biggest miller, Grandi Molini Italiani SpA, announced that it would refuse to import GM wheat because consumers do not want it.

A US Wheat Associates report found that all representatives for Chinese, Korean and Japanese wheat buyers surveyed would not buy or use Monsanto's GM wheat; 82 per cent of buyers from Taiwan and 78 per cent of buyers from South Asia said they would reject the wheat. One hundred per cent of the Japanese buyers indicated that 'regardless of government approval, contracts will stipulate no presence of GM wheat.' This is highly damaging for Monsanto's hopes, as Japan is the largest buyer of US wheat.

But developments need careful watching. Monsanto may lean on Russia, the world's second largest wheat producer, and Ukraine, the fourth largest producer, to grow the GM variety, so enabling it to get started. This is of particular concern considering that neither Russia nor the Ukraine have regulations for dealing with the production and importing of GM wheat.

Canada – Bulk wheat (including durum) ranking by weight, 10 year average 1990/91-1999/2000 (source: Canadian Grain Commission)

Rank	
1	China 15%
2	Iran 9%
3	United States 8%
4	Japan 8%
5	Algeria 6%
6	European Union 6%
7	South Korea 5%
8	Brazil 5%
9	Indonesia 4%
10	Mexico 3%
11	Venezuela 3%
12	Colombia 2%
13	Chile 2%
14	Peru 1%
15	Philippines 1%
16	Malaysia 1%
17	Morocco 1%
18	South Africa 1%
19	Bangladesh 1%
20	Pakistan 1%

Total of top 20 ~83% of 19.4 million tonnes

**Top 20 U.S. export destinations
U.S. – unmilled wheat ranking by weight, 1999**

Rank	
1	Egypt 16% of total
2	Japan 11%
3	Mexico 6%
4	Philippines 6%
5	South Korea 6%
6	European Union 5%
7	Newly Independent States 5%
8	Nigeria 4%
9	Russia 4%
10	Israel 3%
11	Colombia 3%
12	Peru 2%
13	Algeria 2%
14	Bangladesh 2%
15	Yemen 2%
16	Pakistan 2%
17	Sri Lanka 2%
18	Venezuela 2%
19	Indonesia 1%
20	Morocco

Total of top 20 ~85% of 28.3 million tonnes

**Top 20 U.S. export destinations
U.S. – unmilled wheat ranking by weight 2000**

Rank	
1	Egypt 16% of total
2	Japan 11%
3	Philippines 8%
4	Mexico 6%
5	South Korea 6%
6	European Union 5%
7	Nigeria 4%
8	Taiwan 4%
9	Algeria 3%
10	Israel 3%
11	Yemen 2%
12	Colombia 2%
13	Ethiopia 2%
14	Venezuela 2%
15	Morocco 2%
16	Indonesia 2%
17	Jordan 2%
18	Sri Lanka 2%
19	Newly Independent States 1%
20	Thailand 1%

Total of top 20 ~84% of 27.6 million tonnes

The rejection of GM wheat is part of the wider rejection of GM foods. 'Consumers are rejecting GM foods. Markets in Europe, Japan, and elsewhere are closing and domestic markets are likewise threatened', says the NFU of Canada. 'Closing markets and falling prices threaten to overwhelm any small, short-term economic benefits that GM crops or livestock may offer'.

Nutraceuticals

Nutraceuticals – also known as phytochemicals or functional foods – are chemical compounds which their manufacturers claim have health promoting, disease preventing or medicinal properties. The herbal and dietary supplement market is one of their outlets. Nutraceuticals are produced by the food industry, the pharmaceutical industry, and by pharmaceutical/agribusiness/nutrition conglomerates.

The marketing of various prototypical nutraceuticals is 'vastly ahead of the scientific basis required to assure quality, safety, efficacy, mode of action, and thus ethical value to the

consumer, and industry credibility', says the Nutraceuticals Institute, a research, education and outreach program of the US Rutgers University and St. Joseph's University.

Consumers in Western countries buy nutraceuticals as complementary or alternative beneficial products. The products appear to be of limited relevance to poorer consumers, but corporate interests behind nutraceuticals could nonetheless start promoting them in developing countries.

The dangers of nutraceuticals have been known for some time. In 1988 a Japanese company, Showa Denko Inc, introduced a genetically engineered bacterium to speed up the process and cut the cost of producing L-tryptophan, a dietary supplement also used for conditions such as insomnia, stress and depression.

In 1989, it was discovered that 10,000 people, mostly women in their 40 and 50s, were suffering from Eosinophilia-Myalgia Syndrome, a mysterious new disease, characterised by severe muscle pain and high white blood cell counts. All had been taking L-tryptophan. At least 37 people died and over 1500 were permanently disabled from using this product.³

Nutraceuticals are luxury items beyond the reach of most consumers. 'A subset of consumers is falling for them like hot cakes', says Doreen Stabinsky, science advisor to the Greenpeace genetic engineering campaign. 'They are for consumers who drink echinacea-golden seal lemonade, or who want to eat breakfast cereal with added cancer-fighting broccoli compounds... That's where the money is... Of course you have populations in the developing world that can afford this stuff. You have enough ginseng drinking middle/upper classes in parts of Asia to have a lucrative business there also. But the farthest nutraceuticals will penetrate the African continent are the high-end shopping malls of South Africa'.

'Pharm' products

Pharm or biopharm products are an outgrowth of genetic modification. While still in their infancy, biotech companies have high hopes for them.

Rather than genetically modifying plants, the companies insert genes that instruct a plant to manufacture pharmaceutical compounds. This opens up the possibility that medicines and vaccines could be delivered in food products. Pharm products might act as contraceptives, induce abortions, create blood clots, produce industrial enzymes and propagate allergenic enzymes. Companies are claiming that pharm products will benefit the poor; this seems highly unlikely.

In August 2002, industry leader ProdiGene began Phase I clinical trials for a vaccine against traveller's diarrhoea. ProdiGene hopes to deliver the vaccine in a kernel of maize, and estimates that 10 per cent of the US corn (maize) crop will be devoted to biopharm products by 2010.

Plants that are genetically modified to produce pharm products are being grown at over 300 secret locations in the US, alleges the Norfolk Genetic Information Network.

Soya, rice and tobacco, as well as maize are among the crops. In theory, almost any drug could be engineered in a kernel of corn, banana, grain of rice or other basic food. Puerto Rico is to host field experiments with GM pharm crops, along with Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin and Hawaii. The likelihood of disasters with these pharm products is enormous.

Genes are hard to contain. There is a real danger that pharm crops could pollinate farm crops and get into the food chain. In November 2002, it was revealed that GM genes had been found in soybeans in fields of Iowa and Nebraska. In Nebraska, ProdiGene had released 500,000 bushels of soybeans, contaminated by the GM pharmaceutical-laced corn, into the food supply. It was ordered to destroy the beans. The Iowa crop was also destroyed. No formal human safety testing had been done on the GM gene.

'If a company cannot be relied upon to perform such a simple task as to keep pharm corn out of soybeans, how can it be trusted in the far more complicated process of keeping drugs out of corn flakes?' asks Jane Rissler, a senior scientist with the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Norman Ellstrand, a geneticist at the University of California Riverside, has pointed out that if the GM corn had come up inside a corn field instead of a soybean field it could have cross pollinated 'and you'd have no idea where it was'. The result could have been a disaster.

Some fear that contamination of the food supply may already have happened. Meanwhile the US Department of Agriculture has continued to allow drugs and industrial chemicals to be engineered into food crops without regulation.

Biopharm products have created a difference of opinion within the US food sector. Many are concerned that vaccines, enzymes, antibodies and hormones might accidentally end up in their products, through mishandling or pollen drift, triggering expensive recalls.

In mid-December 2002, the US food processing industry made clear that it would not tolerate any experimental industrial or medicine crops seeping into the general food supply, because it fears that such an incident would provoke a consumer backlash.

US food companies have accordingly urged the government to temporarily ban the use of GM food crops to produce pharmaceuticals. 'We don't want to lose international markets because we can't assure the safety and integrity of the food supply,' says the Grocery Manufacturers of America.

There is a question mark over whether pharm products could be used safely. To be medically effective, they would have to be consumed in the right quantities. 'How would people know how much they were supposed to eat? A whole banana, half a banana? Who's to say?' asks scientist Jane Rissler. 'How could you be sure that people wouldn't overdose? How would you even know you were eating the right variety?'

And there are others

These are just three products on the GM horizon. The biotech industry is also working on nutritionally enhanced products, like vitamin A-enhanced rice (see discussion of Golden Rice, next section), which may seem beneficial. And it is developing transgenic animals, notably salmon, despite widespread reservations of the general public. All such new products, whether they seem beneficial or not, need careful watching, and may call for protests and campaigns by consumer groups.

Take action on...

4.1 What's next?

Questions to ask ???

Does your country produce rice, wheat, salmon? These are products that the GM industry is hoping to introduce soon.

What regulations cover animal health and experimentation and will they apply to proposals to introduce new GM foodstuffs?

Campaign ideas ! ! !

Write directly to US and Canadian authorities asking them not to authorise the planting of GM wheat.
See letter on page 57.

Write to bread manufacturers (bakeries) in your country asking them to commit to not using GM wheat in the future. **See letter on page 55.**

Write to US Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman asking for an immediate moratorium on the use of genetic modification to produce pharmaceutical drugs via transgenic crops. **See letter on page 54.**

Document widespread popular rejection of new GM food crops, as did Japan's "Say No to GMOs!" with the signatures of more than 580,000 Japanese consumers protesting the development of GM rice. See GMR Watch Center: www.gmrwatch.org/

Resources/Links www.

Greenpeace Frankenfish

http://cybercentre.greenpeace.org/t/s/ecs/s2?card_id=5&sk=fish&la=en&old_transaction_id=6953&old_transaction_sub_id=4

Global Opposition to US/Monsanto Plan for GE Wheat

Organic Consumers Association

www.organicconsumers.org/gefood/geWheat0702.cfm

Campaign to label genetically engineered food

www.thecampaign.org/newsupdates/feb01t.htm

BioJournal Japan

Commercialisation of GM Wheat

www5d.biglobe.ne.jp/~cbic/english/journal0212.html

Against the grain - Threats of genetically engineered wheat

www.greenpeace.org/news/details?news_id=71699

No to GM Wheat

Greenpeace Canada

www.greenpeace.ca/e/campaign/gmo/index.php

5

Frequently told lies

The biotech corporations make many claims about GM crops, but their claims do not stand up. This section answers a dozen corporate assertions with the facts. It exposes the truth about the claim that GM crops are needed to feed the hungry, about safety, that GM foods are no different to non-GM foods, that critics are anti-science, about the much-touted 'Golden Rice, about labelling, Terminator technology and others. And it ends with the 'prize whopper' about the use of GM crops as food aid in Southern Africa.

Corporate claims – and the facts

Claim: GM crops are vital if the hungry are to have enough food.

Fact: The claim is false. It is based on the assumption that hunger exists because food is in short supply overall. The fact is that food supply is usually enough even in the poorest countries but that hungry people cannot afford it; they can go hungry even when food is abundant on local markets. Inadequate purchasing power and lack of access to resources, such as land on which to grow food, and storage facilities and transport to distribute it are the root causes of hunger. GM technology does not address these causes.

Jacques Diouf, director-general of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, says: 'We don't need GMOs to feed the 800 million people who are hungry'. According to UN food rights envoy Jean Ziegler: 'GMOs could pose a danger to the human organism and public health in the medium and long term... I'm against the theory of the multinational corporations which say if you are against hunger, you must be for GMOs. That's wrong.'

GM crops could also damage the production of traditional crops in the same area. Even if a sizeable physical distance separates GM from non-

GM crops, the pollen can be blown by the wind to contaminate non-GM varieties. This has happened with GM canola in Canada and GM maize in Mexico.

The effect in developing countries could be devastating. The 10,000 year tradition of farmers saving seed and producing food for local people would be seriously impaired; they could become dependent on TNCs for seed that would need chemicals – supplied by the companies. The higher costs could drive millions of small-scale farmers into bankruptcy.

Claim: 'Thousands of tests have been conducted on biotech foods. In fact, crops derived through biotechnology have been tested more than any other plants in the history of agriculture and have been proven safe' (Monsanto website).

Fact: Studies have been few and largely done by the corporations promoting the crops. GM crops have not been tested for their effects on health. When GM maize went through the regulatory process in the US, it was understood that it would mostly be fed to animals. Incautious officials have admitted that safety is in reality being tested on the general public. Although so far there is no evidence of specific health problems, many scientists believe that the novelty of the

technology and its potential hazards (for example allergenicity) raise serious questions which must be assessed by effective pre-market testing.

'We do not have enough reliable scientific evidence on their safety (of GMOs) to be able to make a valid decision as to whether there are potential health effects or not', says Charles Saunders, chairman of the British Medical Association's public health committee.

Claim: GM foods are no different to non-GM foods.

Fact: There is a great deal of difference. GM crops are bred in ways that run counter to traditional ways. The technology enables genetic material to be moved from one species to another – for example from fish to grain – something which conventional breeding cannot do, and which has never happened in the evolution of the natural world. Genetic engineering is thus the biological equivalent of splitting the atom. No one knows what the effects will be. Research by the UK-based John Innes Centre on GM crops shows that the GM process is imprecise and unpredictable.

The GM companies apply a double standard. When they apply for a patent on a GM plant, they have to show evidence of 'novelty' – that is, difference – otherwise their application will be rejected. If and when they obtain the patent, they then try to persuade consumers that the GM food is no different to non-GM food.

Claim: Critics of GM crops are anti-science.

Fact: On the contrary, Consumers International believes in good science, which means proper testing of the new products before they are allowed on the market. There is little consumer concern about the use of genetic engineering to produce medicines. This is because they cannot be marketed unless they pass a strict assessment regime to show that they are both safe and have a (clinical) benefit. This basic scientific discipline has not been applied to GM crops. Instead, their promoters have relied on corporate misinformation and slick public relations campaigns. By claiming that the US regulatory review process proves that GM food is safe, for example, companies are specifically ignoring the need for 'sound science'. It is profits rather than science that drive GM.

Claim: Well-fed, well-meaning people in rich countries are stopping the hungry from having GM foods.

Fact: This patronising assumption implies that people in developing countries do not have their own expertise and needs. It is not only consumers in Western countries who are speaking out about the potential dangers of GM crops and the importance of choice. Consumers in all parts of the world have voiced concern. Farmers in developing countries are becoming increasingly aware of GM's implications for them. In Africa, it was the government of Zambia that decided not to accept GM crops as food aid.

Claim: GM food modified to improve its nutritional qualities can help eradicate serious diseases. For example, Golden Rice, modified to contain vitamin A, offers the hope of overcoming vitamin A deficiency which leads to blindness.

Fact: Golden Rice has actually shown that this is more difficult than the 'save the world' hype suggests. In fact it's close on useless in dealing with disease.

Vitamin A deficiency (VAD) is a serious problem. It is responsible for about half a million cases of blindness each year. But Golden Rice will not eliminate VAD and may even aggravate it. Currently, it is not even known how much vitamin A the GM rice will produce. The goal is 33 micrograms/100g of rice. However,

The daily average requirement of vitamin A is 750 micrograms. A 100 gram serving would thus provide only about 4 per cent of a person's daily requirement, and much less for a child (who will eat less). To meet her or his full needs of vitamin A from rice, an adult would have to consume some 2.5 kilos of rice a day, every day – practically impossible.

Vitamin A rice could also create deficiencies in other micronutrients. It contains very little protein, or iron, and has a low content of fat. Since fat is necessary for vitamin A uptake, this will aggravate VAD.

As with other diseases of malnourishment, VAD occurs because of poverty which is not addressed

by Golden Rice. More accessible and safer foods are dark green leafy vegetables, spinach, carrot, pumpkin and mango.

In fact, overcoming VAD in conventional ways is a little-known, public health success story. Rates are now sharply lower than even 20 years ago. 'Substantial progress has been made towards the elimination of VAD', says the World Health Organisation. Other nutritionally 'enhanced' GM products which may be developed in the future will have to show that they provide a better solution to health problems.

Claim: GM technology enables crop scientists to build characteristics such as drought-tolerance into crops.

Fact: Probably. But this is not the revolution it sounds. Using conventional breeding techniques, scientists are already breeding greater drought/heat tolerance and disease resistance into crops. A drought resistant rice is already being grown by farmers in India that outstrips the proposed biotech varieties. Scientists at the Mexico-based International Centre for the Improvement of Maize and Wheat, for example, have developed varieties capable of coping with stressful conditions. GM technology is not needed to develop such crops. Even if it helped, the technology brings its own unresolved problems, notably the uncertain effects on health and the environment.

Claim: GM crops mean lower costs to farmers, make farming more profitable, and benefit the environment.

Fact: The evidence suggests the opposite. According to a study in 2002 prepared for the European Union Commission, which has not been made public, farmers would face high costs of production if GM crops are commercially grown on a large scale in Europe. Meanwhile, the market prices of most staple food crops has been falling.

Returns to farmers from GM crops often disappoint their hopes and the hopes of the companies. GM soya in Argentina is an example. Monsanto introduced its GM soya in 1996. The bean has a gene that makes it resistant to Monsanto's Round-Up pesticide. Farmers would only have to use the one pesticide, claimed the

company; yields would be higher and costs lower. About 90 per cent of Argentine soya farmers adopted the technology.

Argentina's soya crop has since doubled to 27 million tonnes. But the growth in output is the result of an increase in the area of land under the bean's cultivation. Despite the early promises, GM soya has yielded 5 to 6 per cent less than conventional soya. Neither has the much-heralded decline in pesticide application occurred. Because of the evolution of vicious new weeds, farmers have had to use two or three times more pesticides than previously. Overall, total costs have risen by 14 per cent, and farmers are worse off.

Even the US Department of Agriculture admitted that the 'farm financial impacts [from growing GM crops] appear mixed or even negative'.⁴

Claim: 'Food labelling... has Monsanto's full backing'. (Monsanto advertisement in the UK).

Fact: The biotech corporations accept labelling when the GM food is different from conventional food. But what this means to them is just altering some details on a conventional food label – for example, giving a different protein content in the nutritional information. They argue that GM foods are otherwise no different from conventionally grown foods and that no other labelling is therefore required. This has so far been accepted in the United States. The biotech companies, including Monsanto, strongly oppose any initiative that would require labelling which actually identified foods as GM.

They fear that labelling GM products and ingredients could drive consumers away. When labels for irradiated products became mandatory, the market for them died. Corporations think that the same will happen when GM foods are fully labelled. They blame irrational consumers for this and insist that people should have to eat in ignorance what they might choose not to eat if given simple information. This denial of choice is a straightforwardly anti-consumer position.

Claim: Contamination (pollen spread from GM seed) could be controlled by using Terminator technology.

Fact: Contamination is shaping up to be an intractable problem for the biotech industry. But using Terminator technology is akin to promoting suicide as a means of population control. The technology makes seed sterile at harvest time so that farmers have to purchase new seed every growing season. If Terminator technology wins acceptance under the guise of biosafety, it will be used as a monopoly tool to prevent farmers from saving and re-using seed.

Termination technology would lock farmers into the corporate web and is not part of the solution. The way to stop contamination from GM seed is for these seeds not to be planted.

Claim: It's up to farmers whether they plant GM crops and up to consumers whether they buy them. They have the choice.

Fact: The corporations would seek to deny them that choice. GM technology puts too much power over food into corporate hands and lessens consumer choice.

By buying up local seed companies over the past 20 years, the agribusiness TNCs are in a powerful position to limit the range of seeds that they sell and that farmers can buy.

Claim: We need to cooperate to sort out a way forward on GM food, and not stand in the way of a technology that could help the poor.

Fact: This is not very clever public relations. 'Cooperation', company style, means accepting the company line. The GM companies are putting enormous political pressure on governments to accept their technology. They use arm-twisting, not cooperation, to try to force through technologies that could drive the poor into deeper poverty. Monsanto appears to be deliberately distorting the debate over GM, misrepresenting the views of people in developing countries and allegedly involved in dirty tricks campaigns. (See www.monbiot.com) They get heavyweight political backing, too.

The prize whopper!

Claim: Thirty million Africans are chronically short of food; some are starving to death. It is better they eat the GM food that comes as food aid than die.

Fact: African countries should have the choice of the food that comes in as aid. There is a surplus of non-GM food in Western countries which could be used as food aid. Zambia informed the World Food Programme (WFP) in June 2002 that GM food aid would not be acceptable. The WFP had several months to source alternative food aid, but chose to spend that time pressurising Southern African countries to accept GM grain.

This raises profound ethical concerns. The food shortage has been grossly overplayed by GM food companies, to get in GM food as 'a foot in the door'. Monsanto provides funds for USAID, the United States aid agency, which has tried to persuade African governments to take GM food as aid. Zambian academic, Obed Lungu, dean of the school of agriculture at the University of Zambia, believes that non-GM food is available in Zambia and that 'nobody is starving. There is alternate food available'.

Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of non-GM grain are available, both in the US and elsewhere. The US offered Zambia \$50 million on strict condition that it was spent on GM maize from the US. India has surplus stocks of rice but Zambia is forbidden to buy it with the money.

In specific parts of Africa where there is a shortage, there are real fears about the safety of eating GM maize. It has been estimated that GM maize accounts for no more than 2 per cent of the food intake of US citizens – typically in corn flakes. But in parts of Africa where maize is eaten three times a day, the donated GM maize could comprise virtually 100 per cent of the food intake of the hungry. No one knows what the effects of this would have on health.

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Under the international Biosafety Protocol, agreed in January 2000, Southern African countries have every right to know what they are importing, and to refuse a biotech import if it poses a threat. They are entitled to apply the 'precautionary principle' if they judge there are any risks to health or to the environment from importing GM foods. The United States, under pressure from its biotech industry, has not signed the protocol on the grounds that GM foods are the same as non-GM food.

The threats to the environment, especially to farmers from pollen spread, are huge and could be catastrophic. Within two to three years of GM maize being delivered in aid, African farmers could see their agriculture come under the total control of the corporations.

While USAID is presenting its food aid as an act of charity, it is in fact 'nothing more than an act

of marketing', a Zimbabwe farmer told the Johannesburg Summit in August 2002. The biotech industry's hope is that over time, the market is so flooded (with GM food) that there's nothing you can do about it. You just sort of surrender', admitted a biotech industry consultant.⁵

'In four years, enough GM crops will have been planted in South Africa that the pollen will have contaminated the entire continent', admits a USAID official. Tragically, the corporations and USAID seem proud of it.

After saying that non-GM food was not available, the United States suddenly found 15,000 tonnes of sorghum and 15,000 tonnes of wheat in December 2002, 'to help Zambia in this time of need,' the US ambassador in Zambia is quoted as saying.

Take action on...

5.1 Frequently told lies

Questions to ask ???

Are biotech industry-funded research and development institutes active in your region?

What marketing techniques are being used to promote GM seeds in your country? What information do farmers receive?

What public/academic/scientific/governmental/farmer/NGO etc. outreach activities do biotech industry firms conduct in your country?

Are there any industry-funded NGOs in your country, and what influence do they have on government?

Campaign ideas !!!

Draw up a media strategy to counter misinformation. Promote your consumer group as a reference/source.

Monitor the activities of biotech industry-funded advocacy groups and challenge them publicly on false or misleading claims.

Investigate biotech industry claims for GM acreage, crop yields, production costs, pesticide/herbicide use, sale, exports and profits.

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Find independent scientists you can talk to – and who can talk you through the intricacies of GM food science.

Conduct surveys to determine what information consumers think they need and how consumers think this information can best be delivered to them.

Cover food security issues as part of consumer education. Teach consumers, and especially young people, to discern information from publicity, propaganda and untruths.

Ask local media to do a feature on the corporate claim that GM can feed the world.

Publicise your positions in the media, as in this magazine ad:

www.turnpoint.org/biotechad1.pdf

Resources/Links [www.](http://www.ngin.tripod.com/pblinks.htm)

Professor Bullsh*t's dubious links

<http://ngin.tripod.com/pblinks.htm>

Endnotes

(1) Source: Gregory Graff for the University of California at Berkeley

(2) According to Michael Hansen of Consumers Union, USA: 'There is the possibility of putting the transgenes into the chloroplast genome rather than the main genome (e.g. the plant chromosomes). Chloroplasts are the structures within plant cells where photosynthesis takes place and have their own little genomes. Since chloroplasts are maternally inherited, (e.g. no chloroplasts are found in pollen), this would mean little or no gene flow via pollen. However, chloroplast engineering is not 100 per cent foolproof, as there can be transfer of genes between the chloroplast and the main plant chromosomes'.

(3) Sources: National Eosinophilia-Myalgia Syndrome Network, www.nemsn.org/ems/home.html; and 'I am proof that GM foods can ruin your health', Mail-on-Sunday, (UK), 21 March 1999

(4) Adoption of Bioengineered Crops", Economic Report No. 810, Jorge Fernandez-Cornejo et. al., US Department of Agriculture, Washington DC, May 2002.

(5) Quoted in International Toronto Star, 9 January 2001.

(6) British Medical Association submission to the Scottish Parliament on GM field trials, November 2002.

Food safety and health update

According to the British Medical Association, one of the world's most prestigious bodies of doctors, 'insufficient care has been taken over public health concerns... there has not yet been a robust and thorough search into the potentially harmful effects of GM foodstuffs on human health'.⁶

GM foods have been on the market and the menu for a decade but the jury is still out on whether these foods are safe for humans. Scientists cannot say conclusively that GM foods are absolutely safe for human consumption.

- **Genetic modification may trigger allergic reactions.**

All kinds of foods can produce allergies, with reactions ranging from mild to life-threatening. Whilst there is plenty of information on allergy causing proteins, less is known about how proteins and other materials that may not be allergy causing might react when transferred into another plant structure. Without this evidence, we cannot be certain that transfer of genes from one food into another will not increase the potential for allergic reactions.

The proteins present in genetically engineered Bt crops (including corn, cotton and potatoes) are of particular concern if scientists follow the protocols drawn up by the FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Allergenicity of Foods Derived from Biotechnology (January 2001). Traces of GM StarLink, a GM maize variety approved only as animal feed due to its potential allergenicity, have appeared in corn products for human consumption, including processed food sold in supermarkets, and in food aid.

- **Genetic modification may create new, potentially harmful toxins.**

Genetic engineering can produce chemical changes with potentially toxic effects. There has been at least one major incident of toxic contamination, when 37 people died in the late 1980s after consuming a genetically engineered bacterium used to produce L-tryptophan, a dietary supplement. www.nemsn.org/ems/home.html

New international guidelines for the safety assessment of GM plants, up for approval at the July 2003 meeting of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, recognise and take account of the potential toxicity that new proteins and non-protein products in GM plants could produce. *See:* ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/alinorm03/AI03_34e.pdf

- **Genetic modification may increase resistance to antibiotics.**

Genetic engineering currently employs antibiotic 'markers' to track the success of gene insertion. Scientists are concerned that these antibiotic markers, present in most GM crops currently on the market, may contribute to the decreasing effectiveness of antibiotics against diseases.

The World Health Organisation Expert Consultation held in 2000 called the use of antibiotic resistance marker genes unnecessary. The British Medical Association seeks a ban on the use of antibiotic resistance marker genes in genetically engineered plants. The European Union has proposed phasing out all use of antibiotic resistance marker genes by 2005.

- **Genetic modification may change the nutritional value of foods, with unknown and possibly detrimental long-term consequences.**

No studies have tracked the cumulative effects of eating GM foods, especially among groups, like infants or HIV-positive individuals, with greater vulnerability. Nor have studies been conducted on the long-term nutritional impacts of eating GM foods as a dietary staple, especially in situations of acute or chronic malnutrition, and/or among populations devastated by HIV/AIDS.

- **HIV/AIDS and antibiotic resistance**

One of the reasons cited by the Zambian government for rejecting GM food containing genes for antibiotic resistance are the unknown impacts to the health of millions of people whose immune systems have been weakened by HIV/AIDS.

- **GM genes in baby food**

Testing of infant foods in Thailand, the Philippines and China/Hong Kong has repeatedly detected GM contamination. In June 2002, Greenpeace denounced Nestlé, the Swiss-based food giant, for marketing food products contained GM soya and GM maize. *See:*

<http://archive.greenpeace.org/~geneng/> Nestlé avoids GM ingredients in Europe where labelling is required, but continues to sneak them into Asian countries lacking adequate labelling legislation.

- **Genetic modification can produce unintended effects that are difficult to detect.**

Detection of unintended effects that may inadvertently result from the genetic modification is likely to become even more significant as new GM products, some using multiple transfers of genetic material between different species, are marketed.

- **New GM crops and foods – including milk and animals – now under development present additional health and safety concerns.**

To date, genetic engineering has primarily targeted plants and micro-organisms. But research on the genetic modification of animals for growth enhancement, milk and meat composition and disease-resistance is quite advanced. The US FDA

has received an application to market salmon which has been genetically engineered to grow more rapidly. In addition to unanswered questions concerning safety for humans, this raises serious environmental and ethical concerns.

- **Biopharm products**

“Biopharming” is an experimental application of biotechnology in which plants are genetically engineered to produce pharmaceutical proteins and chemicals they do not produce naturally.

The potential risks to be assessed include the direct safety consequences of using these organisms as food or feed stuff. Also, the proteins designed to produce a pharmaceutical product in the animal’s milk, for example, could find their way to other parts of the animal’s body, causing potential unintended and adverse effects.

Safety assessment by FDA relies on company claims

It is commonly assumed, especially in developing countries, that the US has a strict regulatory regime for genetically engineered foods, and that the prevalence of these foods in the US market is proof of their safety.

Nothing could be farther from the truth, according to US scientist Michael Hansen (Consumer Policy Institute, Consumers Union US). Until recently, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) viewed genetic engineering as an extension of conventional breeding which did not merit assessment by special safety testing.

The FDA approved the Flavr Savr tomato, the first GM food in US stores, in 1994. As told in *First Fruit: The Creation of the Flavr Savr Tomato and the Birth of Biotech Foods* by Belinda Martineau, the industry scientist who conducted safety studies at Calgene, the tomato did go through a nominal safety assessment procedure. However, the FDA’s determination that the Flavr Savr tomato was ‘as safe as other conventionally produced tomatoes’ was a ‘logical conclusion drawn from the data Calgene provided. ‘No independent assessment was made.

continues on next page

What's more, the FDA also concluded 'that subsequent genetically engineered products would not require similarly extensive reviews. Formal approval from the FDA for subsequent products was deemed unnecessary and the FDA put a voluntary consultation process in place, instead.

As a result, all subsequent GM plants presented to the FDA have gone through this voluntary consultation procedure only.

In Martineau's view, however, the test case of the Flavr Savr tomato 'did not support this more general conclusion. Calgene's tomato should not serve as a safety standard for this new industry. No single genetically engineered product should.'

'Simply proclaiming these foods to be safe because there is no scientific evidence to the contrary is not the same as saying 'extensive tests have been conducted and here are the results.' In fact, no scientific evidence to the contrary' could be construed as 'no scientific evidence, period.'

The lack of rigorous human safety testing that Martineau laments is attested to by the letters that the FDA sends to companies that have completed its 'voluntary consultation process.' The FDA posts copies of these letters on its Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition website. www.cfsan.fda.gov/~lrd/biocon.html

The FDA has sent out 52 such consultation letters in the years following its initial assessment of the Flavr Savr tomato. These letters make it quite clear that the FDA does not say that these foods are safe. Rather, the FDA states that it is the FDA's understanding that the company undergoing this voluntary consultation has determined that the food is safe.

Take, for example, the letter on StarLink corn that the FDA sent to AgrEvo (now Aventis) on 29 May 1998. It states: 'As part of bringing your consultation with the FDA regarding this product to closure, you submitted a summary of your safety and nutritional assessment of the new corn variety on March 3, 1998. These communications informed the FDA of the steps taken by AgrEvo

to ensure that this product complies with those legal and regulatory requirements that fall within FDA's jurisdiction. *Based on the safety and nutritional assessment you have conducted, it is our understanding that AgrEvo has concluded that corn grain and forage derived from the new variety are not materially different in composition, safety or other relevant parameters from corn grain and forage currently on the market, and that they do not raise issues that would require premarket review or approval by FDA.* (emphasis added)

The 52 consultations posted on the CFSAN website shows that all post-Flavr Savr letters contain such a paragraph. Note that the FDA does not say that the agency has concluded that there are no safety problems – the FDA simply says that the company has submitted a 'summary of your safety and nutritional assessment' and that it is the company's (not the FDA's) conclusion that everything is as it should be.

If the FDA had done a proper safety assessment and found no problems, why not say so? Or at least state that the FDA is essentially assenting to the company's, not the FDA's, assessment?

Internal FDA documents made public in a lawsuit against the FDA by the Alliance for Bio-Integrity www.bio-integrity.org/list.html show that several of the FDA's own scientists did express concerns about the Flavr Savr tomato. They argued that the new tomato did not even meet the 'reasonable certainty of no harm' criteria which is the basic safety standard for new food additives. But they were ignored.

Only in 2001 did the FDA concede that genetic engineering deserves more scrutiny, announcing that it will require more data for future GM crops.

'While we still have no hard evidence that the food on the market is not unsafe to eat,' Hansen believes, 'we can state with all certainty that the appropriate testing has not been done. If you don't do the studies, you cannot have the answers. Meanwhile, US consumers are the guinea pig in this experiment which they cannot choose to escape from because GM foods are not labelled.'



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Ideas for action

Tools for effective campaigning

Consumers are too often the less vocal and least powerful pillar of the business/government/consumer triad that governs markets. But the consumer movement has developed a long list of advocacy skills it can use to make an impact in local communities and global forums. Here are some examples of tools for effective action that should be used in conjunction with the campaign ideas provided at the end of each section in this kit.

Use existing mechanisms, or create new ones, for NGO participation in policy-making and advisory bodies. These include Codex National Committees, biotechnology and science commissions, bioethics commissions, agricultural and environmental commissions, national standards agencies, Congressional committees on food safety and environmental protection, Health Ministry food safety oversight committees, etc.

Create Forums: Hold meetings with university students, nutritionists, grocers, shoppers, environmental groups, public health authorities, national scientific organisations, agribusiness industry groups, farmer associations, trade activists, media, the general public.

Use simple language: Don't obscure the issue with technical language that your audience may not understand.

Contextualise: Show your audience the individual, local and national ramifications of the global GM debate.

Testing: Product testing is a tried-and-true consumer advocacy tool. See the resources in this kit for tips on testing for GM content.

Survey consumer attitudes: Consumers in developing countries haven't been adequately consulted about their opinions on GM foods. Survey results from Asian countries presented at a CI seminar in mid-2002 showed that many consumers are still in the dark about GM foods.

www.ciroap/food.org But those in the know want regulations and labelling. CI has produced several training manuals for survey taking, including 'How to Conduct a Survey' (available from CI's Africa office.)

Research: One of the strengths of the consumer movement is its research base. Whether surveying consumer attitudes to GM foods in Europe www.which.net/campaigns/food/gm/index.html or documenting of the impact of trade liberalisation on food security for consumers in Asia or Latin America, consumer associations can report on the basis of observed facts and use this research to underpin their policy positions.

See "A Research Manual for Consumer Organisations (downloadable as a PDF from the Publications section of CI's website)

Campaign: Make your views known. The CI guide to campaigning – "Popular and Principled: A Handbook on Campaigning" – is downloadable as a PDF from the Publication section of CI's website.

Inform: Play with the new technologies: email postcards, colourful campaign buttons you can print out, etc. But don't underestimate the traditional methods. Cultivate the media, educate legislators and policy-makers through letter-writing and lobbying, talk to food retailers, provide information directly to general public.

Network/exchange information: Make contacts electronically, in person and via institutions. Dozens of electronic mailing lists and information networks monitor the GM food debate. Many of the websites listed in this kit have bulletins you can subscribe to online.

Use the law: Go to court when national law is being infringed, as did Brazil's consumer association when national authorities attempted to ignore environmental impact requirements and authorise the planting of GM soya.

<http://server.digipronto.com.br/idec.org.br/> File a public interest suit, as did India's Gene Campaign, www.genecampaign.org/.

Countersue, as one Canadian farmer did when sued by Monsanto

www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=14637.

Cast a wide net and look at laws covering product liability, misleading advertising, unfair and monopolistic business practices, double standards and so on.

Voluntary codes of ethics and best practice may cover areas (like infant nutrition) where no hard law exists. CI's World Consumer Rights Day 2001 kit – 'Corporate Citizenship in the Global Market: Accountability and the Consumer Perspective' – looks at ways consumers can encourage corporations to exercise social responsibility.

<http://cioldlive.test.poptel.org.uk/wcrd/index.html>

Use the Ballot Box: Place measures/ referendums on local, national ballots, as did voters in the US state of Oregon www.newhope.com/nfm-online/nfm_backs/Oct_01/labeling.cfm. Be prepared to be outspent by the biotech industry. www.truefoodnow.org/inside_scoop/index.html

Call upon candidates to take a stand, as did Brazil's IDEC when it asked candidates to endorse its Consumer Protection Platform. GM issues can make or break political alliances as well, as seen in recent elections in New Zealand.

www.csmonitor.com/2002/0807/p07s01-woap.html

As a shopper: Shop smart and help others to do so. Check Greenpeace True Food Campaign guides for Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China/Hong Kong, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands New Zealand, United Kingdom and the US.

www.truefoodnow.org/gmo_facts/international-lists.html

Meet with/write to store managers

See Consumer Power on page 48.

See model letter on page 51 .

Boycott stores and brands that ignore your demands.

Take to the streets: Explore creative ways to reach your community, such GM-free food fairs in farmers' markets or public parks, at restaurants with local chefs, direct actions in supermarkets, etc. The World Social Forum www.forumsocial-mundial.org.br/home.asp and other "anti-globalisation" demonstrations have brought a resurgence of street theatre and popular education tactics.

The GenetiX Snowball handbook

<http://alt.venus.co.uk/weed/gs/handbook.htm> explains the philosophy behind its call for direct actions and other non-violent forms of civil disobedience.

Inside/outside: Participation in government consultations at Codex, the WTO or standards meetings is important. CI and other international NGOs are present in many such initiatives, including the new World Bank consultation concerning international assessment of the role of agricultural science and technology. www.agassessment.org

But don't lose sight of the fact that, as Consumers International president Louise Sylvan states, 'producing a paper or sitting on committee is not our main goal. Our primary task is to WIN for consumers.'

'The consumer movement needs to play inside and outside at the same time — in the meetings and on the streets,' Sylvan told delegates at CI's recent Latin America and Caribbean regional meeting (see: www.consumidoresint.cl/) 'And it's a strength of our movement that we can do so'.

Consumer power

Consumer preference is a powerful tool. Where governments have dragged their feet on labelling and regulatory issues, consumers at checkout counters have forced retailers to take their concerns into account by taking a stand on GM foods.

Use shopping power – the consumers' right to shape the market – to sensitise local stores and your community. Shop with information. Or refuse to buy.

Many campaigning organisations – including the Organic Consumers Association <http://OrganicConsumers.org/>, the Campaign to Label Genetically Engineered Foods www.thecampaign.org and others – have developed community action kits to help shoppers target major retail chains and demand the removal of GM ingredients from their house brands. The Greenpeace True Food Network www.truefoodnow.org includes a list of resources aimed at supermarkets, restaurants, school cafeterias, including sample flyers to hand out at stores, sample letters to school cafeterias, sample letters to supermarket managers, a Chef's Statement on GM foods, shopping lists and much more.

While this material is geared for shoppers in the US (where most GM crops are grown, and no labelling is required – an important fact to keep in mind when buying foods imported from the US) – these materials can be easily adapted for use elsewhere.

Suggestions for letters to retailers:

Tell your store/supermarket/school cafeteria/lunchroom/restaurant that you, as a customer, want GM foods to be labelled in order to exercise your consumer right to information and choice.

Write a letter to food companies/producers/manufacturers/stores/supermarkets asking them what their policy on GM foods is and publicise the information you receive in your local media. **See model letter on page 51.**

Tell food companies/producers/manufacturers/ store/supermarkets that, until GM foods are adequately tested, you want them to remove GM ingredients from their brand name products and phase-out products made with GM ingredients.

Calendar of events

Upcoming events for campaigning/media work 2003:

30-31 January

Towards Sustainable Agriculture for Developing Countries: Options for Life Sciences and Biotechnologies
Charlemagne Building, Brussels, Belgium
http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2003/sadc/index_en.html

13-15 February

Codex Alimentarius Commission: 25th (Extraordinary session), Geneva, Switzerland.

This meeting will discuss the conclusions and recommendations of the joint FAO/WHO Evaluation on food standards work and the Codex Trust Fund to assist the participation of developing countries and countries in transition.
www.codexalimentarius.net/

11-14 March 2003

Codex Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology: 4th Session, Yokohama, Japan
www.codexalimentarius.net/

15 March 2003

World Consumer Rights Day 2003
www.consumersinternational.org

24-28 March 2003

Workshop: Advanced Research and Procedures in Biosafety and Risk Assessment for the Environmental Release of GMOs, Florence, Italy. Jointly organised by the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) and the Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare (IAO)

25-28 March 2003

Codex Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Animal Feeding: 4th Session, Copenhagen, Denmark

The Task Force will meet to discuss the Code of Practice for good animal feeding.
www.codexalimentarius.net/

7-11 April 2003

Codex Committee on General Principles: 18th Session, Paris, France.

The Committee will discuss risk analysis for food safety as it applies to Codex and to national governments, code of ethics for international trade in foods and traceability.
www.codexalimentarius.net/

28 April – May 2003

Codex Committee on Food Labelling: 31st Session, Ottawa, Canada

This Committee will discuss general labelling standards. Issues include the labelling of GM foods through genetic modification, organically produced foods, guidelines on nutrition labelling and misleading claims.
www.codexalimentarius.net/

26-30 May 2003

Workshop: Introduction to Biosafety and Risk Assessment for the Environmental Release of GMOs, Trieste, Italy

Organised by the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology.
www.icgeb.org/~bsafesrv/bsfn0211.htm

23-25 June 2003

US – convoked Ministerial-level Conference on Agricultural Science and Technology, Sacramento, California, USA

The conference will address access to technologies, new scientific research, the relationship between regulatory practices and innovation and the creation of partnerships to help developing countries adopt new technologies to increase agricultural productivity

www.fas.usda.gov/icd/stconf/conf_main.htm

23 June 2003

Food Aid Committee of the International Grains Council, London, UK
Expected to review the 1999 Food Aid Convention.
www.igc.org.uk/press/pre.htm

25 June 2003

Annual International Grains Council (IGC) conference, London, UK.
www.igc.org.uk/conf/conf.htm

30 June – 7 July

Codex Alimentarius Commission: 26 Session, Rome, Italy.
www.codexalimentarius.net/

10-14 September 2003

5th WTO Ministerial Conference
Cancún, Mexico.
www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min03_e/min03_e.htm

13-17 October 2003

Consumers International's 17th World Congress, Lisbon, Portugal. See:
www.consumersinternational.org

16 October 2003

World Food Day
www.fao.org/wfd/whatis_en.asp

2004:**21-25 June 2004**

5th Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on Plant Biotechnology.
Punta Cana, Dominican Republic.

Organised by the national REDBIO network of the Dominican Republic. (REDBIO = FAO's Technical Co-operation Network on Plant Biotechnology).
www.redbio.cL/noticias.asp?Id=49



Model letter to food retailers

TO:

DATE:

As a CUSTOMER/CONSUMER ASSOCIATION who is concerned about the future of our food and the environment, I/WE would like to know your company's policy regarding genetically modified crops and foods.

Genetically engineered crops are unregulated and untested. Consumers need assurances that responsible food companies are committed to avoiding use of these experimental foods.

March 15 is World Consumer Rights Day. As a CONSUMER/CONSUMER GROUP, we call upon you to respect the following consumer rights:

- The right to safety: Consumers must be protected against products, production processes and services that are hazardous to their health.
- The right to be informed: Consumers need the facts to make informed choices. The absence of adequate labelling infringes this consumer right.
- The right to choose: Consumers should be able to select from a range of products in accordance with their beliefs and preferences.
- The right to a healthy and sustainable environment: The well-being of present and future generations is a consumer right that can best be protected by respect for the precautionary principle where potentially hazardous environmental impacts are concerned.

As a shopper and consumer, I would appreciate hearing from you on this matter.

This letter is available as a Word document by clicking on:

http://consumersint.eval.poptel.org.uk/document_store/Doc609.doc



Model letter to your Codex Committee on Food Labelling representative or National Codex Committee Contact Point

To Mr... Ms... Head of delegation of XXXX (*Fill in name of your country*)

To the Codex Committee on Food Labelling

Dear Sir/Madam,

More and more of the food produced in the world is being genetically modified. Already there are modified tomatoes, soybeans, papayas, squash, potatoes and rapeseeds on the dinner table in some countries.

Consumers have the right to know if their food is genetically modified for a variety of reasons, for example because of ethical concerns they may have about genetic modification as a production method, or for health reasons to avoid products which may cause serious allergic reactions.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission is discussing this issue at an important meeting in Ottawa, Canada on 28 April to 2 May 2003. NAME OF YOUR ORGANISATION considers that a food, such as a strawberry, that contains a gene making it resistant to frost is fundamentally different from a conventional strawberry. In the same way, it is already accepted by Codex Alimentarius that an irradiated strawberry is different from a non-irradiated one. Together with Consumers International, the voice for consumers worldwide, we are convinced that a major change in food production such as genetic modification requires mandatory labelling because of the fundamental right of consumers to know what they are buying.

Therefore our organisation NAME OF ORGANISATION, representing consumers in NAME OF COUNTRY, calls upon you – as the government official representing our country – to participate in the Codex Committee on Food Labelling and to defend the position that food produced using genetic modification must be labelled. This labelling should cover all foods produced using genetically modified substances, including (1) food containing genetically modified ingredients or genetically modified organisms (2) foods produced from genetically modified ingredients processed to the extent that these ingredients are no longer detectable (such as oil from genetically modified canola, soya lecithin or other additives).

We look forward to hearing from you about the action you will take on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

XXXX (*state your name and position*)

XXXX (*organisation name*)

Member of Consumers International

This letter is available as a Word document by clicking on:

http://consumersint.eval.poptel.org.uk/document_store/Doc612.doc



Model letter to governments demanding GM food labelling

To President/Prime Minister/Senator/Congressman/Minister

I am writing to request that NAME OF COUNTRY establish a policy of requiring labelling of genetically modified (GM) food.

More and more of the food produced in the world is being genetically modified. Already there are modified tomatoes, soybeans, papayas, squash, potatoes and rapeseeds on the dinner table in some countries. Yet the experimental nature of this new technology raises concerns for consumers about its safety for human consumption.

Consumers have a basic right to know what they are eating. GM foods are different from conventional foods because genetic material has been added to them which could not occur in normal plant breeding. A flounder gene, for example, could be present in a GM tomato, but could never be present in a conventional tomato.

All member countries of the European Union have a policy of mandatory labelling of GM food. This is also the policy of Australia, Korea, Japan and many other countries.

We therefore request that mandatory labelling of GM foods be adopted immediately as national policy.

Please write back to NAME OF CONSUMER GROUP and let us know that you support the consumers' right to know about the food we eat by supporting legislation to require labelling on genetically modified foods.

We look forward to hearing from you about the action you will take on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

XXXX (*your name and position*)

XXXX (*name of consumer group*)

Member of Consumers International

This letter is available as a Word document by clicking on:

http://consumersint.eval.poptel.org.uk/document_store/Doc607.doc



Model letter to US Dept of Agriculture demanding a moratorium on 'pharm' crops

Hon. Ann M. Veneman
Secretary, US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250 USA

Dear Secretary Veneman:

We are writing you to request that you place an immediate moratorium on the growing of pharmaceutical products and industrial chemicals in food crops in the United States, including open air field trials.

Consumers all over the world are concerned about the safety and purity of their food. We understand that in 2002, there were two incidents of contamination from test plots of corn genetically engineered to produce a pharmaceutical product. In one case, 155 acres of potentially contaminated corn had to be destroyed, and in another \$2.7 million of contaminated soybeans had to be diverted.

We commend your positive action in these incidents. However, because pollen can be blown by the wind and by storms, and carried by birds and insects, and because people may make errors in handling procedures, we are concerned that there may be many more future incidents of contamination, and efforts at containment will fail.

The United States is a food exporter. If consumers in other countries are to continue to purchase American food products, they must continue to have confidence in the safety and purity of US food.

To assure the safety and purity of the global food supply, we urge you to halt all open air field trials of these 'pharm' crops immediately.

Yours sincerely,

XXXX (*your name and position*)

XXXX (*name of consumer group*)

Member of Consumers International

This letter is available as a Word document by clicking on:

http://consumersint.eval.poptel.org.uk/document_store/Doc611.doc



Model letter to retailers/bread manufacturers, asking them to take a stand on GM wheat

TO:
DATE:

We NAME OF CONSUMER GROUP are writing to express concern about the introduction of genetically modified wheat into the world's food supply, including imports to this country.

As you may be aware, in December 2002, the Monsanto company applied for permission to plant genetically modified wheat in Canada and the USA. Genetically modified (GM) wheat is not grown commercially anywhere in the world at present.

Consumers worldwide hold serious concerns regarding GM foods. We are particularly concerned over the lack of safety testing and labelling of GM content in food. There will be no adequate assessment of the health or environmental effects of genetically modified wheat under the North American systems. Neither Canada nor the US performs independent testing of GM foods, relying instead on data provided by the company to certify the safety of its own products.

Nor will farmers derive benefits from these crops. Despite industry claims to the contrary, the evidence thus far on genetically modified crops indicates that reliance on herbicides is on average not declining, nor are yields enhanced.

There are also concerns about the purity of non-GM wheat grown in countries where GM varieties exist. Cross-contamination of non-GM wheat can happen both in the field and during trucking and handling. Neither the US or Canadian handling system is set up to segregate GM wheat. Consumers in NAME OF COUNTRY will expect to know if their food contains GM wheat, and we ask that you label your products clearly. A majority of consumers wish to avoid products derived from genetic engineering. Accordingly, many companies have stated they will not use GM wheat, and some have indicated they will not buy any wheat originating in countries where GM varieties are grown.

Wheat has been cultivated by humans for 10,000 years. This heritage and the staple food of over 2 billion people is being put at risk. We hope you will agree that the risks of genetically modified wheat far outweigh the alleged benefits.

We would very much appreciate a letter of response from you on how your organisation will meet the wishes of consumers with respect to GM wheat, if it is approved in Canada, the USA or elsewhere.

We also hope that you will join us in urging Canadian and US officials not to allow the commercial planting of GM wheat. Tell the officials listed below that they are putting their export market at risk by allowing the commercial introduction of GM wheat.

TO:
Canada

Lyle Vanclief
Minister of Agriculture
House of Commons
Ottawa CANADA K1A 0A6

Charles Hubbard, Chairman and Members
Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food
House of Commons
Room 633, 180 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
CANADA K1A 0A6

United States

Ann Veneman
Secretary of Agriculture
US Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250 USA

Sen. Tim Flakoll, Chair
North Dakota Senate Agriculture Committee
600 E. Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck ND 58505 USA

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Rep. Gene Nicholas
North Dakota House Agriculture Committee
600 E. Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck ND 58505 USA

Governor John Hoeven
600 E. Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck ND 58505 USA

Commissioner of Agriculture Roger Johnson
600 E. Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck ND 58505 USA

Rep. Diane Rice, Chair
Committee on Agriculture
Montana House of Representatives
Capitol Station
Helena MT 59620 USA

Sen. Keith Bales, Chair
Committee on Agriculture
Montana House of Representatives
Capitol Station
Helena MT 59620 USA

We look forward to hearing from you about the action you will take on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,
XXXX (*your name and position*)
XXXX (*name of consumer group*)
Member of Consumers International

This letter is available as a Word document by clicking on:
http://consumersint.eval.poptel.org.uk/document_store/Doc608.doc



Model letter to US and Canadian authorities, asking them not to authorise the planting of GM wheat

TO:

Canada

Lyle Vanclief
Minister of Agriculture
House of Commons
Ottawa CANADA K1A 0A6

Rep. Gene Nicholas
North Dakota House Agriculture Committee
600 E. Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck ND 58505 USA

Charles Hubbard, Chairman and Members
Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food
House of Commons
Room 633, 180 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
CANADA K1A 0A6

Governor John Hoeven
600 E. Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck ND 58505 USA

Commissioner of Agriculture Roger Johnson
600 E. Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck ND 58505 USA

United States

Ann Veneman
Secretary of Agriculture
US Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250 USA

Rep, Diane Rice, Chair
Committee on Agriculture
Montana House of Representatives
Capitol Station
Helena MT 59620 USA

Sen. Tim Flakoll, Chair
North Dakota Senate Agriculture Committee
600 E. Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck ND 58505 USA

Sen, Keith Bales, Chair
Committee on Agriculture
Montana House of Representatives
Capitol Station
Helena MT 59620 USA

We XXXX (*name of consumer group*) are writing to express concern about the introduction of genetically modified wheat into the world's food supply, including imports to our country.

In December 2002, the Monsanto company applied for permission to plant genetically modified wheat in Canada and the United States. The decision to approve or deny this application now rests with officials like yourself.

Consumers worldwide hold serious concerns regarding GM foods. We are particularly concerned over the lack of safety testing and labelling of GM content in food. There is no adequate assessment of the health or environmental effects of genetically modified wheat under the North American systems. Neither Canada nor the US performs independent testing of GM foods, relying instead on data provided by the company to certify the safety of its own products.

Nor will farmers derive benefits from these crops. Despite industry claims to the contrary, the evidence thus far on genetically modified crops indicates that reliance on herbicides is on average not declining, nor are yields enhanced.

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There are also concerns about the purity of non-GM wheat grown in countries where GM varieties exist. Cross-contamination of non-GM wheat can happen both in the field and during trucking and handling. Neither the US or Canadian handling system is set up to segregate GM wheat.

Many consumers in NAME OF COUNTRY wish to avoid products derived from genetic engineering. Accordingly, many companies have stated they will not use GM wheat, and some have indicated they will not buy any wheat originating in countries where GM varieties are grown.

Wheat has been cultivated by humans for 10,000 years. This heritage and the staple food of over 2 billion people is being put at risk. We hope you will agree that the risks of genetically modified wheat far outweigh the alleged benefits and refuse permission to the Monsanto company to plant GM wheat.

Yours sincerely,

XXXX (*your name and position*)

XXXX (*name of consumer group*)

Member of Consumers International

Please send an electronic copy of any letter you send to Steve Shallhorn, CI Global Campaigns Director
sshallhorn@consint.org

This letter is available as a Word document by clicking on:
http://consumersint.eval.poptel.org.uk/document_store/Doc610.doc

Consumers International position statements on GM food, GMOs and food security

Excerpted from the Statement of CI's 16th World Congress, Durban 2000.

Food security and food safety

The world has enough food for its population, but over 800 million people suffer from hunger and food insecurity. Consumers International recognises that food security is the availability, accessibility and affordability of safe food by all people.

Food security is of concern to the consumer movement as all consumers have the right to sufficient and safe food. In protecting that right, governments and international agencies should:

- promote food security and improved access to food;
- prohibit the use of patents on life forms which impede access for farmers and consumers and increase the dependency of developing economies;
- give priority to the production of staple foods for domestic consumption, where necessary ensuring that agricultural policies are formulated to meet the needs of small-scale farmers (on whom most of developing countries households depend for their food needs and security) and low-income consumers;
- support sound, transparent national land redistribution targeted at the most disadvantaged;
- promote improve access to credit and technical assistance to the rural poor;
- seek to minimise waste in food production and distribution;
- support the development of national food control systems which are in line with international norms, in the interests of local consumers and to facilitate participation in international food markets;
- support sustainable agriculture practices and policies;
- promote information strategies that support informed choices;

- ensure food is safe and truthfully represented;
- encourage and enable consumer participation in setting national and international food standards.

Consumers International and its members should promote sustainable local and regional food production and consumption patterns for example by encouraging consumption of locally produced organic foods and foods in season.

Food safety is, above all, a public health issue. The precautionary principle should apply when scientific evidence is not conclusive enough to establish control measures based on a sound and accurate risk assessment but measures need to be taken for the purpose of protecting public health, public safety, or the environment. Sound science is necessary for making safety decisions, but they must also take into account non-scientific factors such as economic concerns, ethical issues, environmental impact, and the benefits for the consumer to be obtained from the process or product.

Consumers International and its members recognise that the use of biotechnology and other new food technologies may provide important benefits. However, new technologies have raised many concerns for consumers about safety for human consumption, implications for the environment, and potential social and economic impact. With this in mind, governments and international institutions should:

- require full pre-market evaluation and social and safety impact assessments of genetically modified (GM) foods and the products of other new food technologies to ensure that they are safe, environmentally sustainable and acceptable to consumers and impose a moratorium on the cultivation and marketing of new GM foods until this is done;

- desist from any attempts to intimidate other governments which restrict or prohibit such products based on their laws and evaluations of risks and benefits;
- prohibit the use of hormones and antibiotics as feed additives and veterinary drugs in the production of foodstuffs while their safety has not been proved; if any such use is permitted, to ensure that foods are clearly and explicitly labelled;
- require clear and explicit labelling of irradiated foods, genetically modified foods, and other foods whose nature or methods of production are, in the view of consumers, important concerns;

Any food health claims should be clearly defined, easily understood, truthful and enforceable. Such claims should be strictly regulated at the national level and must be consistent with national health policy including nutrition policy and support such policies and goals. Health claims should be accompanied by specific consumer education.

The excessive and indiscriminate use of pesticides poses serious threats to health through direct contact in farming communities and through toxic residues in food. It may also undermine the development of sustainable agriculture.

Many pesticides are dangerous chemicals and regulation of their trade and use varies between countries. The requirement for Prior Informed Consent from importing countries should be included in national legislation, international agreements and the FAO Code of Conduct on the distribution and use of pesticides.

Trade and economics

The daily lives of consumers across the world are directly affected by the actions of governments and international institutions in regulating and liberalising trade, investment and the practices of international business. Speculative financial flows, regional and multilateral trade liberalisation, and corporate mergers and acquisitions are of particular concern.

Consumers International and its members should seek to ensure that the interests and rights of

consumers are recognised and protected in international trade and economic agreements.

Governments and international agencies should:

- reassess the link between the Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property (TRIPs) and global agreements to protect biodiversity, recognising that field of access to medicines, patenting life forms, biotechnology and biodiversity and that the rights of farmers in the developing world should be protected;
- introduce legislation to set standards which transnational corporations (TNCs) must observe and agree a framework for monitoring TNC behaviour;

International rules and standards

International rules and standards have an important impact on safe design, performance and fitness for purpose of products and services, and hence provide vital safeguards and protection for consumers. These rules and standards are made by a number of bodies. Standards must be developed taking into account actual use by consumers and the range of consumers exposed to the product, different cultural and climatic needs of consumers in different regions.

Governments should only undertake harmonisation of standards where there is a clear benefit for consumers and where it is understood that the standards setting process must respect current democratic values.

Consumers International and its members should play an active role in standardisation. All bodies responsible for standard setting should actively seek and facilitate the participation of consumer representatives in their work.

Consumers International and its members should:

- increase their work on the Codex Alimentarius, which has become a focus for setting global food standards following trade liberalisation and the establishment of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).



Resources

Websites

Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (formerly RAFI)
www.etcgroup.org

AgBioIndia: the Forum for Biotechnology & Food Security (India)
www.agbioindia.org/archive.asp

AgBioTech
www.agbiotechnet.com

Biosafety Information Network and Advisory Service (BINAS) Online
UN Industrial Development Organisation
<http://binas.unido.org/binas/regs.php3>

Biotechnology Industry Organisation
www.bio.org

Campaign for Food Safety
www.purefood.org

Campaign to Ban Genetically Engineered Foods
www.netlink.de/gen

The Campaign to Label Genetically Engineered Foods (USA)
www.thecampaign.org

Cargill
www.cargill.com

Citizens' Biotechnology Information Center (Japan)
www5d.biglobe.ne.jp/~cbic/english/index.html

Consumers International Office for Asia-Pacific Food Security and campaign pages
www.ciroap.org/food

Codex Alimentarius Commission
www.codexalimentarius.net/

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN
www.fao.org

Food First
www.foodfirst.org/progs/global/biotech/

Friends of the Earth
www.foe.org

GE Food Alert Campaign Center
www.sustain.org/biotech/pages/home.cfm

Gene Campaign (India)
www.genecampaign.org/

GMR Watch Center (Japan)
www.gmrwatch.org/

Greenpeace International Genetic Engineering Campaign
www.greenpeace.org/~geneng

Greenpeace Canada No GM Wheat
www.greenpeace.ca/e/campaign/gmo/index.php

Greenpeace True Food Network
www.truefoodnow.org/

GRAIN: Genetics Resources Action International
www.grain.org/

Indigenous Peoples Council on Biocolonialism
www.ipcb.org/

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
www.iatp.org/

Institute for Science in Society
www.i-sis.org.uk

KMP Peasant Movement of the Philippines
www.geocities.com/kmp_ph/



Karnataka State Farmers Association
www.ethicalinvesting.com/monsanto/news/10027.htm

Monsanto
www.monsanto.com

Mothers for Natural Law
<http://www.safe-food.org/>

National Farmers Union of Canada
www.nfu.ca/welcome.htm

Norfolk Genetic Information Service (excellent weekly newsletter).
www.ngin.org.uk

OECD Biotechnology Special Task Forces
<http://www.oecd.org/EN/home/0,,EN-home-27-nodirectorate-no-no--27,00.html>

Organic Consumers Association
<http://OrganicConsumers.org/>

Physicians and Scientists for Responsible Application of Science and Technology
www.psrast.org/indexgen.htm

Pure Food Campaign
www.purefood.org

Syngenta
www.syngenta.com

Third World Network
www.twinside.org.sg/bio.htm

Union of Concerned Scientists
www.ucsusa.org

World Health Organisation
www.who.int

Reports/Articles

Asia's Response to Genetically Modified Food
www.fas.harvard.edu/~asiactr/mas/summaries/MAS_020201.htm

Biotechnology and genetically modified organisms. Christian Aid.
www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/0001biot/biotech.htm

Corner House Briefing 10 on Genetic Engineering and World Hunger
<http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/briefing/summary/10gefood.html>

Feeding or fooling the world? Can GM really feed the hungry? FiveYear Freeze.
www.fiveyearfreeze.org

Food Dilemmas: Consumers and genetically modified foods
Consumers Association (UK), 2002
www.which.net

GE Foods Banned in Monsanto's Own Cafeteria in Britain
www.organicconsumers.org/Monsanto/moncafeteria.cfm

Genetic Engineering: Can it Feed the World?
GeneWatch Briefing
www.genewatch.org/Publications/Briefs/Brief3.htm



Grains of Delusion: Golden Rice Seen From the Ground: Joint report by BIOTHAI (Thailand), CEDAC (Cambodia), DRCSC (India), GRAIN, MASIPAG (Philippines), PAN-Indonesia and UBINIG (Bangladesh).
www.grain.org/publications/reports/delusion.htm
www.geneticsforum.org.uk/delusion.pdf

Greenpeace protests against nestle's double standards on genetically engineered food
<http://archive.greenpeace.org/~geneng>

India Together/Samanvaya Report on Golden Rice.
www.indiatogether.org/reports/goldenrice/vitamInA.htm

Monsanto failed halfway in developing herbicide tolerant rice in Japan
<http://www2.odn.ne.jp/~cdu37690/gmonews.htm>

Mounting Opposition in Asia Pacific Region to GE Food
www.organicconsumers.org/ge/asiagmfree.cfm

New Zealand debate over gene-modified food Heats Up
www.csmonitor.com/2002/0807/p07s01-woap.html

One farmer's resistance against Monsanto, J.A. Savage, Alternet, Nov 25, 2002
www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=14637

Suspend GM Crops For 5 Years demand Scientists from South & North.
www.netlink.de/gen/Zeitung/2000/000602.html

The Battle for International Rules on GMOs: The biotech industry versus the world's poor. World Development Movement
www.wdm.org.uk/cambriefs/GMOs/battle.htm

The Biosafety Protocol – controlling trade in GMOs. Christian Aid.
www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/0003bios/biosafet.htm

The covert biotech war
George Monbiot, The Guardian, 19 November 2002.
www.monbiot.com

USDA Pushing Gene Foods on Third World, Devinder Sharma, Pakistan Observer. 27 June 1999.
www.connectotel.com/gmfood/po270699.txt

What Citizens in Asia Think about Genetically Modified Foods
www.afic.org/article.asp?Searchmethod=IndexPage&ArticleID=266&PageName=default&CollectiOnType=5

Why Argentina can't feed itself, Sue Branford, The Ecologist, October 2002.
www.theecologist.org

About Consumers International

Founded in 1960, Consumers International (a non-profit organisation registered in The Netherlands as the International Organization of Consumer Unions, registration number S1 49999) is a federation of consumer organisations dedicated to the protection and promotion of consumers' interests worldwide through institution-building, education, research and lobbying of international decision-making bodies. An independent, non-profit foundation, Consumers International has more than 250 members in almost 115 countries.



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