



## PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE GREEN IRELAND CONFERENCE

**18-20 June 2006, Kilkenny Castle**

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS AND PHOTOS AVAILABLE AT [WWW.GMFREEIRELAND.ORG/CONFERENCE](http://WWW.GMFREEIRELAND.ORG/CONFERENCE)

### Canadian farmer warns of GM 'plague'

The Irish Examiner, 26 June 2006. By Donal Hickey.

A CANADIAN farmer who was involved in a lengthy legal battle with the bio-tech giant Monsanto, has warned Ireland to beware of what he described as the 'new plague' of genetically modified foods.

Percy Schmeiser, now in his 70s, urged Ireland to stay GM-free, saying there was still time to learn from the experience of other countries.

Currently spending much of his time speaking to farmers and environmentalists, he addressed a meeting of the Growing Awareness group, in Clonakilty, Co Cork, last Wednesday.

Recently, the EPA gave permission to a German company, BASF, to conduct a five-year field trial on potatoes engineered for resistance to potato blight on a one-hectare site at Summerhill, Co Meath.

Mr Schmeiser, meanwhile, said there was no such thing as co-existence between natural plants and genetically modified plants, as was proven by what had happened to rape seed and soya bean, in Canada.

"You're talking about total destruction of biodiversity and heirloom seeds," he claimed.

"The seed will spread as it is not possible to contain pollen flow and seeds are also blown on the wind. It can be blown off trucks and farm equipment."

Mr Schmeiser told his audience that when such seed was used, yields dropped and the nutritional value of genetically altered crops was only about half that of organic crops.

"Genetically altered seeds also lead to a massive increase in the use of chemicals and the super weeds that develop are more powerful and toxic than anything we have ever seen before," he went on.

"Such seeds are also more difficult to control and spread quickly to urban areas, golf courses, cemeteries and other open spaces."

Mr Schmeiser's case was billed as a classic David-and-Goliath confrontation between a Saskatchewan family farmer and a corporate giant.

It was seen by some as a case of the rights of a farmer to continue a traditional way of farming, while others saw it a blatant attempt to take advantage of years of research and development of a better product, without paying for it.

For seven years, Mr Schmeiser argued that seeds from Monsanto's patented genetically modified canola (rape-seed) landed on his 1,400-acre farm near Bruno, east of Saskatoon, by accident.

Monsanto had altered the plant's genes to make the canola resistant to Roundup, a Monsanto weed killer. Monsanto patented the gene and the process of inserting it into the seed.

Farmers usually use seeds from one year's crop to plant the next year's crop. But when they buy Roundup Ready canola from Monsanto, they have to agree to buy new seed every year. They must also allow their lands to be inspected by Monsanto.

Monsanto says that's the only way they can recoup the money they've spent designing a better plant and the only way they can fund future research.

Mr Schmeiser, however, maintained big companies must not be allowed 'totally dominate' the seed business.

"There's a huge loss of rights to a farmer when his land becomes contaminated against his wishes and the corporate interests take over. The patent gives the corporate worlds more rights than the farmer has," he said.

"Farmers should be up in arms, but a lot of them don't realise what's going on. Farmers could lose their rights overnight to their seeds and plants."

He argued that a company can't patent a plant, relying heavily on a previous case involving the question of whether higher life forms can be patented.

Canada's highest court sided with Monsanto — in a five to four ruling. The court, however, did agree with Mr Schmeiser that the plant is a higher life form and cannot be patented.

In the end, Mr Schmeiser called the legal battle a victory, in part because the court ruled that he would not have to pay Monsanto's legal costs.

"We did not expect this to go all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada," he said after the ruling. "We were fighting for the fundamental right of the farmer to save his seed and use it year after year."

## **Comhhdháil feirmeoireachta ag éileamh cosciomlán ar bharrá ghéinathraithe**

**Lá (Nuachtán Leithúil na Gaeilge), 14 Meitheamh 2006. Le Colm Ó Broin.**

Ta gá le cosc iomlán ar bharrá géinathraithe (GA) are fun na hÉireann de réir eahgraithe comhhdháil feirmeoireachta a bheidh ar siúl ag an deireadh seachtaine.

Dar le Michael O'Callaghan ó Éire Saor ó GA (GM Free Ireland), ni féidir le barra GA agus barra neamh GA maireachtáil le chéile sa tír toisc go bhfuil sé dodhéanta traséilliú ag an sheachaint idir síolta an dá shagas barr.

"Deir na comhlachtaí bith-thailmhaíochata agus Coimisiún na hEorpa nach bhfuil baol ann go dtuailleodh barra GA gnáthbharrá nó barra orgánacha ach nil sá sin flor ar chor ar bith."

Beith an chomhdhsáil, 'Green Ireland Conference', ar siúl i gCaislean Chill Chainnigh, Deá hAoine - Dsá Domhnaigh seo chugainn, agus beidh aoi-chaiteorsí ó Éirinn, an India, an Fhrainc, an Bhreatain, Ceanada agus Stáit Aontaithe Mheiriceá i láthair.

Dar le O'Callaghan, tá gá le cosc uile-Éireannach are bharrá GA agus ní leor cosc sa Phoblacht nó sa Tuaisceart amháin.

"Murach cosc a bheidh ann ó thuaidh, mar shampla, bheath na síolta GA are fud na tíre tar éis cúpla bliain. Ni féidir and traséilliú a stopadh.

"Ma tá barra GA ag feirmeoir ar thaobh amháin de chnoc, aistroidh siad go dti an feirmeoir ar an taobh eile den chnoc ar an ngaoth nó ar éin nó beacha, sar if bhfad.

"Bionn paitinn ag na chomhlachtaí talmhaíochta ar na síolta agus má théann siad isteach i do thalamh, is leis an gcomhlacht na barra a thagann uathu.

"Tharla sé seo do dhuine de na haoi-chaonteorí ag an gcomhdh&eaacute;il, Percy Schmeiser ó Ceanada, agus thug an comhlacht a bhi i gceist chun na cúirte é agus chuir ina leith go raibh se ag úsáid na síolta go midhleathach.

"Chinn an Chúirt Uachtarach i gCeanada gur leis an gcomhalcht na barra."

Beidh an gníomhaá cáiliúl frith-bhochtanais ón India, Vandana Shiva, ag an gcomhdháil, chomh maith le Deborah Koons Garcia, stiúrthóir an scannáin, The Future of Food, agus bean chéile le Jerry Garcia, iar-cheoltóir de chuid an ghrúpa The Grateful Dead.

Tá na heagraithe ag iarraidh ar lucht feirmeoireachta, bia agus turasóireachta freastal are on gcomhdháil chun íomhá agus branda 'glas' na tíre a chosaint.

"Tugann an íomhá ghlan ghlas cháilúil atá ag Eirinn buntáiste iomaíoch do na hearnálacha feirmeoireachta, bia agus turasóireachta ach tá seans ann go gcaillfear an buntáiste seo de bharr truaillithe ó loiscneorí agus bia is talmhaíocht ghéinathraithe."

Beidh ionadhaithe ó Bhord Bia, Glenisk Ltd, O'Briens Sandwich Bars agus Cumann Feirmeoirí Eallach agus Caorach na hÉireann ina measc siúd a bheas ag freastal ar an chomhdháil fosta.

## **GM crops attacked**

**Irish Independent Farming Supplement, 20 June 2006.**

Leading experts have warned Ireland's food producers and farmers that GM crops would destroy our green image.

Delegates at the Green Ireland conference in Kilkenny were told immediate action was needed to prevent our world-famous clean, green image being destroyed by GM animal feed, seeds and crops.

## **Canadian farmer brings fight to Cork**

**Irish Examiner, 20 June 2006. By Stephen Cadogan**

Canadian farmer Percy Schmeiser brings his international fight against genetic modification to West Cork this week.

Last month, he filed a complaint against the Government of Canada with the UN Commission on Human Rights, alleging violation of consumers' and farmers' rights, and attempts to force the use of GM seeds which are modified to be sterile, and to prevent farmers from saving and replanting seeds.

He faced a multi-million dollar patent-infringement lawsuit from Monsanto in 1996, after his crops became contaminated with the company's GM rapeseed. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that he no longer owned his seeds and crops, because they contained the patented GM genes.

On June 21, at 8pm in the Quality Hotel, Clonakilty, a presentation by Schmeiser should be of interest to anyone who wants to retain the integrity of Irish produced food, say the organisers, from the Skibbereen based Growing Awareness group, which supports food production that respects the earth, farmers and growers.

## **Stay GM-free says campaign 'hero'**

**Irish Independent, 19 June 2006. By Aileen Sheehan.**

A CANADIAN farmer who spent years fighting a David and Goliath battle against agricultural company Monsanto has urged Ireland not to open the door to genetically modified (GM) plants.

Once allowed into a country, GM crops could never be eradicated because they spread to other farms and contaminated conventional crops, Percy Schmeiser told a Green Ireland conference in Kilkenny this weekend.

Mr Schmeiser, from Saskatchewan, spent seven years fighting a million-dollar lawsuit brought by Monsanto.

It wanted compensation because GM rapeseed had been discovered on his farm. He said his rapeseed had been accidentally contaminated by the crop in neighbouring farms.

Monsanto won its case that it had the right to assert ownership of the modified gene, but lost its claim that Mr Schmeiser should pay compensation for profits from the crop.

"You are an island in a unique position to be GM-free and you should hold on to that," he said.

Deborah Koons Garcia, widow of Grateful Dead singer Jerry Garcia, and maker of anti-GM film 'The Future of Food', also spoke at the conference.

## Call for State to become GM-free zone

**The Irish Times, 19 June 2006. By Michael Parsons.**

Ireland should become a GM-free zone, a Green Ireland conference in Kilkenny heard at the weekend. Irish food was at risk of "contamination" and the State's beef and dairy exports may be threatened by EU and World Trade Organisation (WTO) pressure to accept genetically modified (GM) seeds and crops, speakers said.

Irish and international delegates attended the conference, organised by environmental activist groups GM-Free Ireland Network and An Taisce. The chairman, Michael O'Callaghan, warned farmers they could "lose ownership of their seeds and crops" if the Government allowed the release of patented GM plants.

But the farming sector appears to be split on the issue, with the Irish Farmers' Association expressing cautious approval while smaller groups, such as the Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association and the Irish Organic Farmers' Association, are strongly opposed.

Dr Vandana Shiva, director of the India-based Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, said: "The patenting of the world's traditional agricultural crop genes by agri-biotech companies is nothing less than bio-piracy. It is a blatant attempt to colonise the future of the world's genetic resources."

Fr Seán McDonagh, an environmental activist and author, condemned the "evil" being done by the WTO, and said the Republic should be "ashamed" of the Government's support for GM in international trade talks.

Clare Oxborrow, a Friends of the Earth Europe spokeswoman, told delegates the majority of EU consumers did not want GM food and 4,500 local government authorities in the EU - including the entire territory of Poland, Austria and Greece - have declared their opposition to GM. But she said despite "huge public opposition, the EU Commission was developing "pro-GM policies".

Deborah Koons Garcia, who showed her film documentary, *The Future of Food*, said there was growing "grassroots mobilisation" in the US against GM.

## Ireland urged to prevent GMO disaster

**Contaminated farmers would lose ownership of their crops  
Need to protect "Ireland - the food island"  
WTO and EC slammed for collusion with corporate interests**

**GM-free Ireland press release, 18 June 2006.**

Delegates from America, Asia and Europe attending the Green Ireland Conference at Kilkenny Castle over the weekend warned Irish farmers that they will lose ownership of their seeds and crops if the WTO and the European Commission succeed in forcing the Irish government to allow the release of patented genetically modified varieties here.

Canadian farmer Percy Schmeiser told the conference that he faced a million dollar patent infringement lawsuit from Monsanto after his crops became contaminated by its patented GMO genes in 1996. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that because Monsanto owns the patent on the GMO genes, Mr. Schmeiser's seeds and crops now belong to Monsanto.

Dr. Vandana Shiva, the Director of the India-based Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, explained how the WTO's Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights agreement enables giant companies like BASF and Monsanto to secure patent rights on specific GMO genes, and then claim ownership of any farmers' crops that have been contaminated by them. "It's as if the company that created the furniture in this room got a patent on the design which then enabled it to claim ownership of Kilkenny Castle."

She said "the patenting of the world's traditional agricultural crop genes by giant agri-biotech companies is nothing less than biopiracy. It is a blatant attempt to colonise the future of the world's genetic resources."

The US film director Deborah Koons Garcia, whose film *The Future of Food* will be broadcast by RTE later this year, said US counties and states are fighting fierce legal battles against powerful biotech corpora-

tions to protect their right to ban GM seeds and crops, and have already done so in parts of California and Maine.

Dr. Stanley Ewen of the Independent Science Panel on GM said GMO genes can survive digestion, create food allergies and possibly increase the risk of cancer and other diseases. "I am very concerned that food made from Monsanto's "RoundupReady" GM crops (which are modified to survive that company's "Round-Up" weedkiller) may pose a particular threat to pregnant women and their unborn babies" he said.

Irish Food entrepreneurs Brody Sweeney (CEO of O'Briens Sandwich Bars) and Vincent Cleary (the Managing Director of Glenisk Organic Ireland) said the contamination of Irish farm produce by GM ingredients would destroy the credibility of our huge beef and dairy exports under Bord Bia's branding of Ireland - the food island.

Mr Sweeney said his business strategy is based on producing the highest quality Irish foods for international consumers who refuse any product which contains GM ingredients. Mr. Cleary, said his organic milk and yoghurt company would be forced out of business if his produce contained any detectable trace of GM ingredients.

Eddie Punch, general secretary of the Irish Cattle and Sheepfarmers Association, said Ireland should capitalize on its green image and called for the whole island to be declared GM-free.

Benedikt Haerlin, who convenes the annual European Conference on GMO-free Regions, emphasized that EU member states and their regions have the legal right to protect conventional and organic farming from GM contamination, including the right to ban GM crops where this is the only reasonable way to achieve this goal. He said "there is no such thing as the right to contaminate organic and conventional crops within EU legislation".

Mr Haerlin criticized the European Commission for trying to force GM crops into the European countryside. He said the EC recently tried to establish that protection of the countryside and non-GM farmers is only legal up to the arbitrary contamination threshold of 0.9% which it set for the mandatory labeling of GMOs in food and feed.

"The EC's empowerment of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to assess the environmental risks of GMOs is completely unacceptable. The EFSA is environmentally incompetent, does not have the capacity to conduct its own risk assessments and routinely rubberstamps flawed GMO risk assessments provided to it by the agri-biotech companies it is entrusted to regulate."

Bord Bia marketing director Muiris Kennedy said he will organize a meeting of the country's major food retailers, food producers and farming organisations to discuss the implications of GM food and farming as soon as possible.

Michael O'Callaghan, the coordinator of the GM-free Ireland Network who chaired the three-day conference said the so-called "co-existence" of GM crops with conventional and organic farming is not possible. "The best way forward is for Ireland to be declared a GMO-free zone, like Switzerland, Poland, Greece, and most of Italy, France and Austria."

The conference was hosted by the GM-free Ireland Network and An Taisce - the National Trust for Ireland. It was produced by Global Vision Consulting Ltd, and was sponsored by Glenisk Organic Ireland, the Irish Organic Farmers Association, the Irish Doctors Environmental Association and other groups.

## **Conference told most farmers 'in the dark' about GM technology**

Irish Times, 17 June 2006. By Michael Parsons in Kilkenny.

Farmers are being bullied into accepting genetically modified (GM) crops by the EU and the World Trade Organisation, according to speakers at the Green Ireland conference in Kilkenny yesterday.

The three-day event, co-hosted by the GM-Free Ireland Network and An Taisce, the environmental group, also heard that most Irish farmers were "in the dark" about GM technology.

Eddie Punch, general secretary of the Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association, accused the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) of "suppressing debate" and said his organisation called for the entire island of Ireland to become "a GM-free zone".

He said there was a huge demand from consumers in Europe for "more natural" food, either organic or free range, and Ireland should capitalise on its "green image".

The conference heard that beef and dairy farmers who avoid using GM animal feed could achieve higher prices, and that Baskin-Robbins, the world's largest ice-cream maker, recently signed an agreement with the Silver Pail dairy in Co Cork for GM-free ice-cream for outlets across Europe.

IFA president Pádraig Walshe was invited to the conference but a spokeswoman said he could not attend "due to partnership talks".

She referred to the IFA policy on GM which states that "like science and technology generally, it can have many positive implications for agriculture and food production. These include control of animal and plant disease, reduction of costs and improved productivity." The conference chairman, Michael Tullaghan, said he was "horrified" that the Government was now supporting GM, and accused Fianna Fáil of breaking a 1997 promise to keep Ireland GM-free.

He accused the IFA of "collusion" with the European Commission, and denounced the policy of "co-existence" which allowed GM crops to be grown in proximity to GM-free farms. This was "nonsensical" due to the risk of cross-contamination.

He claimed "victory" following a recent decision by German company BASE not to proceed this year with a field trial of potatoes at a farm in Summerhill, Co Meath. They had been genetically modified to resist blight.

Kate Carmody, representing the Irish Organic Farmers' and Growers' Association, claimed that the major political parties have "no policies on GM, and that things are happening by default".

However, Dr Pat O'Mahony, the chief specialist in biotechnology at the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, which was not invited to the conference, said food containing GM products which was on sale in Ireland "is as safe as its non-GM counterparts".