

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GREEN IRELAND CONFERENCE

Kilkenny Castle, 16-18 June 2006

Full proceedings may be found at  
[www.gmfreeireland.org/conference](http://www.gmfreeireland.org/conference)

## DEBORAH KOONS GARCIA • Speech

Produder / Director of the film  
The Future of Food  
[www.thefutureoffood.com](http://www.thefutureoffood.com)



Deborah Koons Garcia is the producer / director of the film **The Future of Food**.

This excellent documentary provides an in-depth look at the genetically modified foods controversy. Shot on location in the United States, Canada and Mexico, the film examines the complex web of market and political forces that are changing what we eat as huge multinational corporations seek to control the world's food system through patented GM crops which invade conventional and organic crops and require contaminated farmers to pay annual patent royalties or face patent-infringement lawsuits.

**The Future of Food** explores alternatives to large-scale industrial agribusiness, placing organic and sustainable agriculture as solutions to the global farm crisis.

Everyone in Ireland should see this film. You can order the DVD for €25 from GM-free Ireland on (0404) 43 885, or contact us to arrange a screening, cinema release or TV broadcast in your community.

This is the complete transcript of an audio recording of Deborah's speech, slightly edited for clarity.

Footnote references may be found on page 3.

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**T**hank you. It's really wonderful to be in Ireland; this is my fourth visit here, and it's really wonderful to come here to this conference. I was longing to come here and I was trying to figure out how to do that, and then I got the invitation from Michael, so that made it really easy to get myself here.

I am a filmmaker – I'm basically a person who makes films, and I eat. I'm not a scientist, I like making films. I became interested in organic food, healthy food when I was in college in 1970, and since that time I've been kind of a food fanatic. I've informed myself about food and health, food and social justice and I made a film called The Future of Food. And so for the past several years I've been researching that, making that, and for the last two years, traveling around with it all over the world, and sending it places.

It's been in festivals and theatres, and used by organic farmers, by the Slow Food movement [1], shown at the Slow Food Film Festival, and it will be given away to every person at Terra Madre [2] – (Carlo [Petrini] wants to do it, so that's great!) And it's being used by activists and all kinds of people. So I am very concerned now about the future of food.

And what is the future of food? The future of food is up for grabs. There are really two different futures. One of them is the corporate industrial model, with chemicals and pesticides – basically factory farming. You look at a corn field that looks like a corn field, but really it's just a factory that's growing out of the ground, with genetically engineered food that has DNA from humans and all kinds of creatures put into the plants, using pieces of DNA from viruses and bacteria owned by corporations who are buying up the seed supply and who are controlling more of what the farmers use as inputs, and also determining where the farmers sell their food. So they are getting bigger and bigger, and the farmers are getting squeezed in the middle. And the food that is getting presented to us as consumers, certainly in the United States, is not labeled. We don't know where it's from, and their attitude towards us is "shut up and eat!"

That road, that future of food is really, to my mind, a terrifying one – where we have no choice, farmers are serfs, and the consumers are in worse and worse health, so we have to back to these very same corporations and get a pill to take every day to actually get through our lives! So that's one future.

There's another future which is the future that we are all, I think, most interested in – and the future that every human would choose – which is a future where we know where our food is coming from; we know who's growing it, we know what's in it, we have a choice. That food supports communities, rural communities, it supports our neighbours and our friends – and that's the organic movement, the sustainable movement, the Slow Food movement, the anti-GMO movement. And that is the most powerful movement on the planet now.

I think food, for many years, was a hidden issue. People just assumed the food was safe, the system was just happening. But what's been happening in the food system in the last several years – the buying up of seed companies, the corporatisation of food, the suing of farmers if DNA from patented plants gets on their property as Percy Schmeiser who's here with us had happen to him – all of these things have been happening and people are fighting back. They are choosing organic, they are choosing local. And these two systems can't co-exist.

I think that here in Ireland, where you don't have GMOs, and where you are a green island, and where the beef is raised on pasture instead of in big factories, you have an opportunity to really re-claim that part of the Irish food system that has gone this other route and pull it back, and really become a green island, a food island, a place where people really trust the food, and where it's healthy food, and it's safe food, and it feels local. I think it's an exciting opportunity.

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The fact that they were not allowed to plant these GM potatoes this past season in Ireland was an enormous victory, and so there's no food in Ireland now that's genetically modified. I see this as a movement that could be used to push back these forces of corporatisation and this kind of appropriation of our food supply, to just push it. Start in Ireland and push it back all the way through Europe and through the world, so we as citizens have the future that allows us the choice.

Because we will chose. If people have the choice to eat a genetically engineered potato or one which they grew or their neighbour grew, they're all going to choose the one they grew or their neighbour grew. That's just a human thing: it's our instinct to want healthy food.

So I think that it's something that you should think about and it's something that people should be active about. Now is the time, because if we don't make these decisions now, and demand that we have the kind of future that we want, in the next five or ten years we're going to find ourselves living in a very different environment – and it will be too late, we will be too far down that road to change.

A few weeks ago, Bill Clinton spoke at the big biotech conference that happens once a year in the United States. He was a paid speaker. He's very pro-GM; he was the person who was President when he said "come on in, let's start". And he gave a speech that I'm sure he was paid very well for, where he said "We need GM crops because of global warming. Without genetic engineering we're not going to be able to face the global challenges resulting from global warming." And if you're actually educated about this you know that this is just complete B.S. But never mind, that's what he said.

And when the biotech industry of course immediately brought this out in their PR, they sent it out over the internet with a picture of this apocalyptic vision where there was a desert with a windstorm and this horrible world that you would not want to be part of. And actually, what plant could grow there? But nevertheless we were supposed to go "Hurrah GM!" because we could grow plants in this world. It wasn't that we should change what we do so we don't have that world, it's that "Oh, let's get science to give us an answer for the world."

And when I saw that I thought "Oh, well that is so horrible!" And it's also what I have personally been fighting against for years. And what the people that I have been fortunate enough to meet and to work with, like the people at this conference, have also been fighting against.

Because that's not a future that I want to be part of. In fact, I want to get back to the Garden! And I want all of you people here in Ireland to be there too. So thank you.

#### NOTES:

1. Slow Food was founded by Carlo Petrini in Italy in 1986. It is an international association that promotes food and wine culture, but also defends food and agricultural biodiversity worldwide. It opposes the standardisation of taste, defends the need for consumer information, protects cultural identities tied to food and gastronomic traditions, safeguards foods and cultivation and processing techniques inherited from tradition and defend domestic and wild animal and vegetable species. Slow Food boasts 83,000 members worldwide and offices (in order of creation) in Italy, Germany, Switzerland, the USA, France, Japan, and Great Britain. Slow Food International: [www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com). Slow Food Ireland: [www.slowfoodireland.com](http://www.slowfoodireland.com).
2. Terra Madre was the historic conference produced by Slow Food International in Turin, Italy, in October 2004. See [www.terramadre2004.org/terramadre/welcome.html](http://www.terramadre2004.org/terramadre/welcome.html). The **Terra Madre 2006 conference** will take place in Turin from 26 - 30 October 2006. Participants will include 1,500 food communities from 5 continents, 5,000 farmers, breeders, fishermen and traditional food producers, 1,000 cooks and 200 universities who will meet in Turin to share experiences and discuss the development of a new concept of agriculture and good, clean and fair food.