

Statement from An Taisce RE GMOs in Ireland for

GATHERING MOMENTUM – STOP GM! Event April 10th

Ireland is signatory to the 'Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety' which is part of the Convention on Biological Diversity, an international agreement which aims to ensure the safe handling, transport and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effects on biological diversity and pose risks to human health.

There are huge risks associated with the release of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in to the Environment, one of which is the fact that those organisms can never be recalled. Once released nothing can control their expansion, their mutations, their invasion of "unimproved" plants, or the cross fertilisation with regular crops. The potential consequences for biodiversity, and food sovereignty, are far reaching.

Research on impacts of GM herbicide tolerant spring crops on farmland Biodiversity, carried out on more than 200 plots in the UK, has demonstrated worrying trends. Bees and butterflies were found to be fewer in the GM fields, as low as 68% less abundant in GM fields than in fields of conventionally grown crops. The field margins of GM crops were also found contain significantly reduced biodiversity. Other complex ecological relationships were found to be much impacted by the GM crops, such as a reduction in a range of pollinators and other beneficial invertebrates.

Most of the Biotech industry focus in genetic engineering is based on herbicide resistance. The engineered crop is developed with a resistance to a particular herbicide, often produced by the same company that has developed the crop, so that the fields with the engineered crop can be heavily sprayed with the herbicide to kill off all other plants. This obviously has major knock on impacts in the environment, for example in herbicide residues in soil and water, and to wild flora and fauna in the landscape. The clearance of huge fields and tracts of land with powerful herbicides produces farmland devoid of wildlife, spelling disaster for already declining bird and other wildlife populations.

Genetically Engineered crops strengthen the control of multinationals over our agricultural sector and thus weaken food security by increasing farmer's dependence on international seed and chemical supply, and decreasing the genetic diversity of and hence crop resistance to unforeseen factors such as drought and disease. The scandal of increasing hunger in a world of overproduction is often used to justify the development and use of GM crops. This perversity ignores the fact that current global food production is enough to feed 1.5 times the world population and that the maintenance of biodiversity and ecosystems services is far more essential for maintaining livelihoods of the world's hungry.

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An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland
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