



An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, TD
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Monday 3 October 2005

Re: Emergency action to protect Ireland from imminent GMO seeds & crops invasion

Dear Taoiseach,

I am writing on behalf of the GM-free Ireland Network, which represents over 32,000 farmers, foresters, fishermen, food producers, food retailers, food exporters, restaurants, hotels, leading chefs, NGOs, professional associations and consumers North and South of the Border.

Please take immediate pre-emptive action to protect Ireland and Co. Wicklow in particular from an imminent invasion of high-risk genetically modified organisms (GMOs) which threaten the property rights, health, biodiversity, food security, farm incomes, and freedom of choice of current and future generations of Irish farmers and consumers - forever.

As you know, following Dick Roche's vote abstention at the Council of Ministers last December, the EC made a watershed decision on 31 August to approve the importation of Monsanto's patented GT73 oilseed rape seeds for use as animal feed – against the wishes of the majority of EU member states and consumers. The inevitable spillage of these live GMO seeds (during unloading, haulage, storage, handling, and processing) will create a *de facto* release of the first GMO crop in Ireland – without the EC and Irish authorisations, liability laws, insurance and stakeholder agreements required for its cultivation.

GT73 oilseed rape is *substantially different* from the other genetically modified (GM) animal feedstuffs widely used by Irish farmers, because it consists of live GMO seeds which proliferate easily, are proven to contaminate related crops (by seed dispersal, volunteers and wind-borne pollen) within a 26km radius or more, and can never be recalled after release.

This undemocratic EC decision has created a national security emergency that will, *inter alia*:

- (1) result in rapid irreversible GM contamination of Irish farmland & protected areas;
- (2) contaminate all cultivated and wild Irish oilseed rape within 4 to 5 years;
- (3) may transfer GMO genes to bees and related Brassica crops (including broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, charlock, cauliflower, collards, kale, mustard, radish, rocket & turnip);
- (4) require contaminated food produce to carry a GM label which EU consumers refuse;
- (5) force contaminated farmers to pay for patent royalties, GMO analysis, monitoring;
- (6) trigger an explosion of uninsurable patent-infringement & cross-contamination lawsuits;
- (7) reduce Ireland's share of the European farm, food and tourist markets;
- (8) ruin organic horticulture farmers by causing them to lose their organic certification;
- (9) catastrophically reduce the biodiversity of Irish ecosystems and agricultural seeds;
- (10) infect farmers with a plague of herbicide-resistant "superweeds" and crop failures;
- (11) violate consumers' right to choose safe GMO-free conventional and organic food;
- (12) terminate Ireland's world-famous reputation as the "clean green food island" - forever.

The EC's decision is epidemiologically equivalent to forcing us to have unprotected sex with someone infected with HIV, in the sense that *contamination is inevitable*.

GMO contamination also triggers biopiracy. The Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement (together with EC and Irish patent law) appear to assign possession of crops contaminated with patented GMO genes to the patent owner – in this case, Monsanto, as happened in the Percy Schmeiser case. The EC-backed introduction of GMO seeds, crops and livestock thus gives potential ownership of our daily food – the property and heritage of Irish citizens – to a foreign transnational corporation. This violates our Constitution, is totally unethical, unsustainable, and is the biggest conceivable rip-off in the history of the State!

The enclosed Bulletin outlines 8 steps you can take to deal with this emergency before the first shipment of live GMO seeds or crops arrives in Ireland. Future generations will hold you accountable: you need to prevent this disaster now, *before it happens*.

Across the EU, regional and local authorities are taking action to protect their share of the growing market for safe food. 163 EU Regions and over 4,500 sub-regional areas in 22 EU member states already prohibit or restrict the use of GMO seeds and crops. See enclosed map of 1,000 identified Irish sites which require legal protection from GMOs. An enlarged map of sites in Co. Wicklow may be viewed at www.gmfreeireland.org/map.

Please implement these 8 steps ASAP (see enclosed Bulletin for details):

- (1) Put into effect an **immediate national ban on Monsanto's GT73 rape seeds**.
- (2) Request an **injunction** to prevent GT73 seeds entering Co. Wicklow.
- (3) Encourage Co. Wicklow and its Region to become a **GMO-free zone**.
- (4) **Get Fianna Fáil to defend Ireland's right to conserve its GMO-free status**.
- (5) Sign the **EU-wide Petition** for Co. Wicklow's right to decide local GMO policy, and lobby your Regional Authority to **join the Assembly of European Regions** so it can lobby more effectively on your behalf for an EU directive that recognises this right.
- (6) **Declare the "National Strategy for Co-existence" invalid** because it excludes consideration of health and environmental risks and also fails to comply with the democratic public participation in environmental decision-making legally required under the Biosafety Protocol, the Aarhus convention, the Codex Alimentarius, and EC law.
- (7) **Ensure Ireland votes "NO" on all future proposals to legalise GMO animal feed, seeds, crops, trees, fish, livestock, and food**.
- (8) **Require the EPA, FSAI and their EC counterparts to implement their own comprehensive GMO risk assessments** instead of relying on biotech industry claims.

If you would like to arrange a screening of a documentary film and/or briefing about GMOs, please contact me on (0404) 43 885 or by email at moc@gmfreeireland.org.

Kindly let me know your action plan as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Michael O'Callaghan
Chairman, Global Vision Consulting Ltd.
On behalf of the GM-free Ireland Network
www.gmfreeireland.org

Enclosures: 32 oilseed rape seeds, GM-free Ireland
Bulletin #1, flyer, sticker, and map.

P.S.: Soundbites from the Oireachtas debate on GMOs held on 15 June:

"An unelected body, the European Commission, has made an incredibly important decision that is unacceptable and illegal. We are sullyng Ireland's reputation as a green environment and food producing country. Shame on the politicians and officials who supported it and shame on us for allowing it to happen. I call on Ireland to prohibit these products!" – **Michael Mulcahy TD (FF)**

"All of us, from officials to public representatives, have failed to discuss the issue and it is regrettable that we are only doing so now." – **Senator Ann Ormonde (FF)**

"A great opportunity exists to market Ireland as a GM-free zone. 70% of the EU do not want GM foods. We should encourage our Government to introduce a ban to keep this country free of them for the foreseeable future." – **Senator Don Lydon (FF)**

"The introduction of GM foods by Monsanto and other companies would give rise to significant concerns for the health of the population. I seek a GM-free Ireland." – **Mae Sexton TD (PD)**

"I am totally opposed to the introduction of GM foods because of the serious health repercussions. Experts throughout Europe observe that supermarkets and food manufacturers are concerned at the introduction of GM foods because the public does not want them and there is no market for such products. Moreover, the warnings from experts and doctors dictate that such products should not be forced into our food chains. I hope the Government will oppose the introduction of GM foods at EU level." – **Senator James Bannon (FG)**

"Ireland's reputation for clean, green food is an important marketing asset for Irish farm producers and the food industry. There is no benefit to be gained if this image is compromised." – **Mary Upton TD (Labour)**