

PRESS RELEASE
Wednesday, 22nd February 2006

TOP CHEFS OPPOSE GM POTATO TRIALS

Top chefs today spoke out against the proposed trials of GM Potatoes in county Meath, when they took part in a press briefing in Dublin, which also saw doctors, farmers, and politicians voice their opposition.

On 13 January 2006, BASF Plant Science GmbH notified the Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of its intention to conduct an experimental release of patented and genetically modified (GMO) potatoes in the Boyne Valley near the Hill of Tara. Today was the deadline for submissions to the EPA on the proposal. If permission is granted, the GM potato crops will be grown on the site for the next five years.

Speaking on behalf of Euro-toques Ireland (the Irish branch of the European Community of Chefs/Cooks) at today's conference, Evan Doyle of Brooklodge Hotel, Co. Wicklow expressed their grave concern at the possible introduction of genetically modified crops into the Irish environment; "no guidelines have been set out in relation to the growing of GM crops in this country and there is no *safe* way of releasing them into the environment. There is nothing whatsoever to guarantee that organic and conventional crops will not be contaminated, leading to loss of earnings and possibly even legal proceedings against farmers". The GM crops are patented, which means that if a farmer's crops are accidentally cross-contaminated and he is found to be growing the crop, he may be liable for patent infringement.

The chefs' organisation Euro-toques has come out strongly, both in Ireland and internationally, over the last two years against the growing of GM crops. One of their main aims is to protect the natural diversity of food and to promote food which is produced in a traditional and wholesome way. These chefs see genetically modified food as probably the single biggest threat to our food supply.

"This potential threat from GM crops cannot be compared to other food scares such as BSE, Foot & Mouth etc; once the seeds are released there can be no recalling, no culling, no vaccinating. And we have no guarantees about their safety"; Evan Doyle commented today. "the corporations who produce these seeds tell us they are safe and they will solve world hunger, but it is a well-known fact that there is more than enough food already being produced in the world and poverty and hunger do not stem from a shortage of food".

Genetic diversity is essential to the survival of plants; when crops are genetically diverse one may survive when another fails. These seeds, which are created in a lab and patented, are genetically identical and therefore could lead to mass crop failures. The most worrying aspect, however, is that once there is widespread cultivation of genetically modified crops our food supply will be controlled by huge multi-national corporations, who will literally own the rights to our food.

Evan Doyle, who is proprietor of Ireland's only organic-certified restaurant, concluded that "For Euro-toques it is above all a question of consumer choice. If cross-contamination of GM and conventional or organic crops occurs, consumers will not longer have a choice. And our consumers do not want genetically modified food".

This afternoon's Press Conference at Buswells Hotel was organised by the GM-Free Ireland Campaign and was followed by a protest outside government buildings.

For Further information please contact Ruth Hegarty on 01-6779995 or 087-7989474

Notes to the Editor

Euro-toques International

Euro-Toques or the European Community of Cooks is a pan-European organisation representing 4,000 European cooks. The organisation was founded in Brussels in 1986 by Mr. Pierre Romeyer of Le Maison de Bouche, a well known three star Michelin restaurant. Mr. Romeyer invited an eminent chef from each European country to join him in implementing his ideals. The founding team were Mr. Gualtiero Marchesi of Italy, Mr. Juan Mari Arzak of Spain, Mr. Paul Bocuse of France, Mr. Cas Spijker from Holland and Dr. Myrtle Allen from Ireland. Each founding chef set up the organisation in their own country, selecting exceptional chefs to support them as assistant commissioners.

Official recognition was awarded to the organisation by Mr. Jacques Delors, who was President of the E.C. at that time. Euro-Toques is now recognised by the EU as a promoter of quality food and acts as a lobby group on European food legislation. Each national branch lobbies its own ministries of food and agriculture, to protect the food in their own country.

Euro-Toques Ireland

Euro-Toques was established in Ireland by Dr. Myrtle Allen of Ballymaloe House in 1986. Dr. Allen was assisted by Commissioners Mr. John Howard, Mr. Declan Ryan, and Mr. Gerry Galvin in setting up the Irish branch. Today our membership is composed of over 200 of Ireland's leading cooks, who support the philosophy of sourcing quality, fresh, local and seasonal ingredients to serve to their customers. Members include Michelin starred chefs Derry Clarke of L'Écrivain and Guillaume LeBrun of Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud, Ross Lewis of Chapter One, Neven Maguire of McNear Bistro, and Darina Allen of Ballymaloe.

Brooklodge

The Brooklodge Hotel and Wells Spa at Macreddin, Co. Wicklow, owned and run by Evan Doyle, spokesperson for Euro-toques Ireland on the GM issue, features the Strawberry Tree Restaurant, Ireland's only certified organic eatery.

As certified organic food cannot contain any GM elements, cross-contamination with GM crops would spell the end of organic production. Organic producers, such as those who supply Brooklodge Hotel would go out of business.

GM-Free Ireland

The GM-free Ireland Network is a rapidly growing association of individuals and organisations collaborating to keep the whole island of Ireland free of genetically modified (GM) animal feed, seeds, trees, crops, livestock, fish and food.

The Network was launched at the Forging a GM Policy for Ireland workshop <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/events/workshop1/index.php> in 2004.

Members now include over 32,000 farmers, foresters, food producers, food distributors and exporters, leading chefs and restaurants, NGOs, professional associations, doctors, economists, lawyers, journalists, students, and consumers. For more information log onto www.gmfreeireland.org.

Ruth Hegarty

Secretary-General

Euro-Toques Ireland

11 Bridge Court, City Gate

St. Augustine Street

Dublin 8

Tel: 01-6779995 Fax: 01-6779977

Email: info@eurotoquesirl.org <<mailto:info@eurotoquesirl.org>>

Website: www.eurotoquesirl.org <<http://www.eurotoquesirl.org>>

