

IRISH ORGANIC FARMERS' AND GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

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GM Potato trials pose threat to Organic farming

Commenting on the proposal by the giant German chemical company BASF to grow GM potatoes in Co. Meath, IOFGA Chairman Pdraig Fahy expressed grave concern for organic farmers and growers:

“We are appalled that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may issue a licence to allow this five year trial to proceed. To do so will risk contamination of surrounding land and will jeopardise the livelihoods of organic farmers.”

“Every day we hear more and more reports of problems with GM technology – crops not growing as predicted, deleterious effects on animal and human health, unforeseen impacts on other wild and cultivated plants.”

“When you have an increasing body of evidence suggesting that there is still considerable scientific ignorance about GM technology and you also have an increasing body of evidence of serious and irreversible harm from some GM technologies then you really have to adopt a precautionary approach. We urge the EPA to do this.”

“The Irish government has not yet agreed a clear approach to co-existence between GM crops and other crops - especially organic crops. If the EPA approves this application from BASF then it will be prejudicing the outcome of these discussions and would in effect be determining Irish policy on co-existence.”

Commenting on the market demand for GM potatoes Mr. Fahy said: “There is no demand for GM produce in Ireland. And in the UK – which is still one of our biggest external markets – GM is viewed with considerable disdain. Supermarket customers want nothing to do with it. So why are we risking our greatest marketing asset – our clean, green image. Surely the best way to protect and enhance the market for Irish food is to keep Ireland GM free and encourage sustainable food production such as organic farming.”

Notes to editors:

- 1) Irish Organic Farmers & Growers Association (IOFGA) represents organic farmers, organic growers, and consumers of organic food throughout the island of Ireland.
- 2) IOFGA certifies processed and non-processed food and agricultural produce which has been produced according to the Irish Standards for Organic Food and Farming