



## **FINE GAEL'S GENETICALLY MODIFIED CREED**

### **Opposition party and Teagasc led by GM industry spin doctors**

DUBLIN — In 2008, the Irish Times reported on a leaked Fine Gael email [1] which revealed that the opposition party's pro-GM food and farming policy was produced by a Canadian Government spin doctor who has been internationally condemned for scientific fraud [2].

Fine Gael has now made a fool of itself again when the party's agriculture spokesperson Michael Creed accused the Government of trying to stifle a Teagasc study [3] which falsely suggested that the Government intends to ban GM animal feed, and that doing so would terminate the Irish pig industry [4].

Creed – whose opinions on GM food and farming sound like they were drafted by Monsanto's PR department – made his latest gaffe during Dail Questions last week. The misinformation has since been disseminated by the Fine Gael web site [5], GM industry front groups [6], and the Irish Farmers Journal [7].

But Creed got it wrong on three counts.

First off, the Department of Agriculture did not reprimand Teagasc for its pig study, but for expressing a related political opinion (which state bodies are not allowed to do, particularly when Teagasc is funded by and reports to the Dept. of Ag). Teagasc Director Prof. Gerry Boyle has since admitted the mistake in a letter to the Minister of Agriculture.

Second, the Programme for Government [8] makes *no mention whatsoever of any ban on GM feed*. The Government's GM-free Ireland policy aims to prohibit field trials and cultivation of GM crops, and to introduce a voluntary GM-free label for farmers and producers who choose to remove GM feed from their supply chains. This will enable agri-food operators to retain access to – and compete in – the rapidly growing international market for top quality, safe GM-free food which the vast majority of EU and international consumers demand, and which Irish grass-based cattle and dairy farmers can produce more cost-effectively than farmers in competing countries [9]. Fine Gael's perpetuation of the myth of a non-existent government ban on GM feed imports to scare-monger the farming community only serves the interests of the giant biotech and commodity trade corporations which are desperate to get the world's farmers addicted to their patented GM products.

Third, Teagasc's claim that using Non-GM feed would wipe out Irish pig farming is simply incredible. Pig farmers across Europe are thriving on their GM-free supply chains. Here in Ireland, the Vice-Chairman of the IFA Pigmear Committee, Pat O'Flaherty, produces over 8,000 pigs a year in his factory farm at Gort Na Muc in Rathangan, Co. Kildare, with no GM feedstuffs and no use whatsoever of soy feed – without incurring one cent in extra costs [10]. 40% of Brittany's pork production is GM-free; leading French, German, Italian pork brands are GM-free, as is all of Switzerland's beef, pork and dairy production [11].

### **Teagasc's pro-GM propaganda**

Teagasc has spent millions of taxpayer funds on research and development of GM crops, co-funding a Canadian GM industry conference promoting GM food [12], and maintaining a website whose content appears to have come from Monsanto's PR department [13]. Teagasc is currently planning to close down its Kinsealy research centre for conventional horticultural crops which provides essential analytical and diagnostic services for Teagasc advisers and for the horticultural industry.

The head of Teagasc, Prof Gerry Boyle, is an agricultural consultant to the World Bank, which uses public tax-payer funding from the rich countries to promote GM farming in the developing countries. Teagasc hosted an international conference promoting GM seeds and crops at University College Cork in 2008 [14], on behalf of a Canadian biotech industry front group called the Agricultural Biotechnology International Conference (ABIC) Foundation, managed by Ag-West Bio Inc. and funded by Monsanto. ABIC's Board of Directors includes Jimmy Burke (Teagasc's head of Biotechnology), the conference chair Ashley O'Sullivan (a former Monsanto employee), Roger Kemble (President of Syngenta Biotechnology Inc), and Malcolm Devine (former employee of Aventis CropScience and Bayer CropScience)!

Boyle makes the astounding claim that the record of GM crops internationally has been "very good" – completely ignoring the scientific evidence of health dangers, reduced yields, GM superweeds, crop failures, widespread contamination, patent infringement lawsuits, product recalls, billion-dollar food industry losses, EU market rejection and loss of biodiversity. And Teagasc's head of biotechnology, Prof. Jimmy Burke, has hailed the introduction of GM maize in Spain as a "great success", despite the widespread contamination of conventional and organic farmers in that country.

## Smart economy

Tomorrow and Thursday, the EU Committee of the Regions will host the 3rd World Conference on Non-GMO labels, Quality Production and European Regional Agriculture Strategies [15], attended by agri-food delegations from 51 EU Regions including high-level representatives of the GM-free Ireland Network and the Irish Cattle and Sheepfarmers Association.

If Fine Gael were remotely serious about supporting Ireland's agri-food sector, they would be attending this event. But neither they – nor the other pro-GM bodies including the IFA, ICMSA, and the Irish Farmers Journal – will be there, even though phasing out GM feed would provide the Irish agri-food sector with the most credible safe GM-free food brand in Europe.

But if Fine Gael and Teagasc have their way, Irish pig farmers will only be able to produce the lowest quality GM-fed produce in Europe. New leadership, please!

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## NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. "Fine Gael emailer comes a cropper", Miriam Lord's Week, Irish Times, 13 October 2007.
2. "Briefing Document for Fine Gael: GMOs and Ireland: 10 years of poor FF led policy":  
<http://www.gmfreeireland.org/politics/GMOs-and-Ireland.fg.document.oct.2007.doc>

The Fine Gael briefing contains, inter alia, verbatim text from a letter which Shane Morris previously sent to the Editor of the

Kilkenny Voice newspaper, dated 28 September 2007 (published 27 September). Morris is an employee of the Canadian Government agency, Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, who has been accused of scientific fraud on GMOs. He is currently studying "Science Communication" at UCC. For details see <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/morris/index.php> and his Spin Profile [http://www.spinprofiles.org/index.php/Shane\\_Morris](http://www.spinprofiles.org/index.php/Shane_Morris) Morris's authorship of the briefing is well-known in Fine Gael circles and was also confirmed by Fianna Fáil politicians after the email was sent to them by mistake in October 2008.

Fine Gael's credibility on GM food and farming was already in tatters before this embarrassing revelation that they are being advised by a covert agent of the Canadian Government.

In the lead up to the 2007 General Election, Fine Gael leader Enda Kenny told Michael O'Callaghan of GM-free Ireland that this country can "do nothing" to stop the invasion of GM animal feed, food and crops – apparently unaware that many other EU member states and Regions have already banned the crops and were starting to phase out GM animal feed as well.

On 20 October 2007, Fine Gael MEP Mairead McGuinness, along with MEPs James Nicholson (Ulster Unionist Party) and Struan Stevenson (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party), engaged in a failed attempt to introduce numerous amendments to an EU Parliament Resolution on behalf of the PPE-DE Group. The amendments aimed, inter alia, to raise contamination thresholds for imported GM animal feed, and to fast track the EU approval of illegal GM imports from the USA and other countries. In December 2006, Mairead McGuinness attempted to introduce numerous amendments into a Motion for a European Parliament Resolution on Biotechnology: Prospects and Challenges for Agriculture in Europe (2006/2059 (INI)). Mairead's amendments included weakening EU regulations on GM food and feed, and promoting the release of GM pharma crops, which would contaminate food crops with pharmaceutical products, agrofuels, and industrial chemicals! Luckily, MEPs threw out the Motion and the Resolution after widespread protest by citizens. For details see <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/politics>

3. "The GM debate and the Irish pig meat sector. Peadar Lawlor and Maria Walsh explore the viability of the Irish pig industry in the presence of a GM feed ban." T Research, Volume 4, Number 4, Winter 2009, ISSN 1649-8917: <http://www.teagasc.ie/publications/tresearch/tresearch200910.pdf>.

4. The study is full of misinformation and spin. See GM-free Ireland's detailed critique at <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/news/2009/nov.php#teagasc>

If you do the math on Teagasc's estimated extra cost of €2.51 to €3.93 per GM-free pig, with an average Irish pig deadweight of 70kg, the consumer would only have to €0.04 to €0.06 extra per kg of GM-free pig meat. That's less than one cent for a package of bacon or sausages!

Note that the Vice-Chairman of the IFA Pigmeat Committee, Pat O'Flaherty, produces over 8,000 pigs a year in his factory farm at Gort Na Muc in Rathangan, Co. Kildare, with no GM feed stuffs and no use whatsoever of soy feed - *without incurring one cent in extra costs.*

Related research found that the extra cost which a consumer would have to pay for a litre of GM-free milk in the UK is GBP 0.0045.

5. "Gov bid to gag Teagasc raised in Dáil - Creed", Fine Gael press release, 27 January 2010:  
<http://www.finegaele.org/news/a/2164/article>

6. "Emerald politics fail to bring home the bacon: Irish Government attempts to gag GM research: issue raised in Irish Parliament", GMO Pundit a.k.a. David Tribe, 27 January 2010:  
<http://gmopundit.blogspot.com/>

7. "Creed claims Teagasc reprimanded over GM", Pat O'Keefe, Irish Farmers Journal, 30 January 2010.

8. The Irish Government announced its GM-free policy on page 11 of the Renewed Programme for Government of 10 October 2009 ([http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications\\_2009/Renewed\\_Programme\\_for\\_Government,\\_October\\_2009.pdf](http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_2009/Renewed_Programme_for_Government,_October_2009.pdf)). The policy states that the Government will "Declare the Republic of Ireland a GM-Free Zone, free from the cultivation of all GM plants", and "To optimise Ireland's competitive advantage as a GM-Free country, we will introduce a voluntary GM-Free logo for use in all relevant product labelling and advertising, similar to a scheme recently introduced in Germany." The policy has not yet been implemented with legislation.

9. See video clip of the November 2009 GM-free Ireland press conference on GM-free labelling at <http://www.gmfreeireland.org>

For more information, download "GM-free food production: a unique selling point for Ireland - the food island" (47-page briefing with GM-free market survey, 17 Nov. 2009 (1.2MB pdf):  
<http://www.gmfreeireland.org/GMFI-briefing-3.pdf>

10. Communication to Michael O'Callaghan of GM-free Ireland at the 2009 Euro-Toques National Food Forum & Fair 'The Whole Hog; Re-examining how we rear, kill and eat pigs in Ireland today':  
<http://www.eurotoquesirl.org>

11. See note 9 above.

12. Irish Government slammed for GM food conference, GM-free Ireland press release, 24 August 2008:  
<http://www.gmfreeireland.org/press/GMFI41.pdf>

13. Teagasc maintains the Irish Government's official Information Centre for Genetically Modified (GM) Crops in Ireland, co-funded by the the Environment Protection Agency (EPA). The Centre's web site at <http://www.gmoinfo.ie> reads like a Monsanto advertisement. The website's short section on what it refers to as the "perceived risks" fails to mention anything about the health, environment, economic and food sovereignty danger of GMOs.

14. See note 12 above.

15. <http://www.gmofree-euregions.net>