



GM - update and suggestions for action

Current situation

Those opposing GM crops have won a significant victory in the battle to protect GM free food and farming. Despite the UK government giving the green light for the commercial planting of GM maize for animal feed, this GM crop will not be grown in the UK.

We are extremely disappointed that the government chose to disregard public opinion, ignoring the evidence that clearly shows GM crops should not be grown in the UK¹, and that the public do not want GM. The good news is that Bayer, who own Chardon LL maize, has abandoned plans to get it's product approved.

Bayer withdraws GM maize application

On the last day of March, Bayer withdrew its application, blaming tough government restrictions. We believe the truth to be that they were caught out by their own hype. GM companies have claimed that GM crops need fewer chemical sprays. Bayer's GM maize was grown during the government's field scale trials, with use of one weed-killing spray. But Soil Association research in the USA and Canada had already shown GM maize grown commercially needed at least two weed-killers.

Unfortunately for Bayer, the British Government took them at their word, and said that their GM maize could only be grown using one weed-killer. Based on experience in America, Bayer know that won't work in practice. We believe that it is this that has led Bayer to withdraw the GM maize.

Peter Melchett, the Soil Association's Policy Director, said, "This is wonderful news... It's a victory for reason, common sense and the will of the general public."

What the government decision means:

- **Beet and oilseed rape opposed:** The UK government has opposed EU approval for the commercial cultivation of GM beet and oilseed rape as grown in the GM crop trials
- **GM industry must pay for damage:** According to the government's GM committee, the GM industry will be liable for any damage their GM crops cause.

Take action

Ask your supermarket if their own-brand non organic milk is GM-free

The supermarkets, major food companies and consumers all say that they will not buy GM food. The only remaining outlet for GM maize is as feed for livestock, particularly dairy cows. Many non-organic livestock are currently being fed imported GM soya and maize. From April 2004, GM animal feed must be labelled, so dairy farmers can easily exclude it from their animals' diet. But the non-organic consumer cannot choose to exclude GM from their diet because the milk from cows fed on GM feed is not labelled as such.

Only a GM-free policy from supermarkets and dairy producers will ensure milk is GM free. This is the best way of stopping GM maize being grown. If you don't want to drink milk or eat meat from animals fed on GM crops, let your supermarket know.

Ask the supermarket what they are going to do to make sure GM feed is not used. Please send us copies of any written replies you get.

ASDA	0500 100 055	Sainsbury's	0800 636 262
Co-op (CWS)	0800 317 827	Somerfield	0117 935 6669
Marks & Spencer	0207 268 1234	Tesco	0800 50 55 55
Safeway	01622 712 987	Waitrose	0800 188 884

Further points to tell the supermarkets:

- As an organic consumer you are concerned that GM maize could contaminate non-GM seed stocks and non-GM maize in the field.
- Organic farmers growing sweetcorn for retailers, vegetable box schemes and anyone growing sweetcorn in allotments and gardens will also be affected.
- GMOs go against the principles of organic production.
- Companies are now moving to ensure that no GM animal feed is used for their meat and dairy products. For example, Marks and Spencer, Co-op, Grampian chickens and Kentucky Fried Chicken.
- Non-GM feed policies will be easier to implement due to the requirement for GM feed to be labelled.

How to support the work of the Soil Association

The Soil Association is a membership charity, we urgently need your support to continue our work. As public support for the Soil Association continues to grow, our ability to influence the thinking and policies of government and big business grows with it. Join us today and help us to continue campaigning for sustainable agriculture and organic food. You can join the Soil Association on our website, over the phone or by writing to us.

Footnotes

1/ The Independent Science Panel, *The Case for a GM-Free Sustainable World*, 15 June 2003, The full report is available at the ISP's website: <http://www.indsp.org/>

2/Benbrook CM (2003) *Impacts of Genetically Engineered Crops on Pesticide Use in the United States: The First Eight Years*, BioTech InfoNet, Technical Paper No 6, Nov 2003. The report analyses agrochemical (herbicide and insecticide) use over eight years (1996-2003) on the three main GM herbicide tolerant (HT) crops in the US (soya, maize and cotton) and the two main GM Bt crops (maize and cotton). The report can be downloaded at <http://www.biotech-info.net/technicalpaper6.html>

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Further Reading

Please see the Soil Association website library, <http://www.soilassociation.org/library>, for more information

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