



# Californians for GE-Free Agriculture

- News in Genetic Engineering -

November 14, 2008

## Quick Links

[Join Cal GE-Free](#)

[More About Cal  
GE-Free](#)

## In This Issue

[Take Action on GE Animals](#)

[Take Action on GE Regulations](#)

[GE Food May Affect Fertility](#)

[Documentary Film on Monsanto](#)

[Help Build Cal GE-Free](#)

## Dear GE Network,

Thank you for your interest in genetic engineering as it relates to California's food and farms. Please feel free to pass this newsletter along to friends and family by using the "forward email" button at the bottom of this page.

## TAKE ACTION:

### GE animals need stronger oversight and labeling

**Deadline: November 18, 2008**

On Sept. 16th, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released proposed guidelines on how to regulate genetically engineered animals, in a move that is expected to pave the way for them to enter the food supply. Under the proposal, the FDA would require regulatory approval before any GE animals could be sold as food. While the new guidelines would require a long-overdue review process, the proposed rules are flawed in the following ways:

- No human trials will be required to test the safety of eating GE animals
- No labeling be required
- The ethics of engineering animals for food production will not be considered
- No consideration will be given to environmental issues like impacts to wildlife or biodiversity
- While regulating genetically engineered animals through the more rigorous "new animal drug" provisions is good news - meaning each new GE animal would have to get FDA approval before going to market, like new drugs do - the secrecy inherent in our current drug approval process is bad news for consumers.

A sample letter and electronic filing system is available from The Center for Food Safety at <http://ga3.org/campaign/GEanimals>.

## **STAY TUNED: Federal Preemption Language in Proposed New USDA Rules**

On Oct. 6th, newly proposed U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) rules were released governing genetically engineered crops, including food crops engineered to produce pharmaceutical and industrial products.

Then, on October 9, the agency released a correction to its proposed rules that addresses preemption of local and state laws on GE. The rule as corrected would read: "All State and local laws or regulations that are inconsistent with this rule will be preempted".

There is some legal debate about the impact of this change. There is similar language already in code, and this may represent no change from the status quo. Of course, the concern is that this revised language threatens the local and state GE laws that have passed in several counties in California, Maine and Hawai'i, and in some rice-producing states.

The current deadline for public comment is November 25th, 2008. We are consulting with experts at the Center for Food Safety, the Union of Concerned Scientists and Consumers Union about the preemption clause as well as other recommendations for public comment. We hope to send an action alert next week based on their advice.

In the meantime, if you would like to submit a letter calling for an extension on the public comment period based on the correction and the need for more time to consider it and the proposed rules, address them to the USDA Secretary of Agriculture and fax to (202) 720-2166.

## **NEWS**

### **Austrian Government Study Finds Possible Effects of GE Food on Fertility**

Excerpted from: <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/press/releases/ge-threat-to-fertility-11112008>

November 11, 2008



A study published by the Austrian Ministries for Agriculture and Health identified serious health threats of genetically engineered (GE) crops. In one of the very few long-term feeding studies ever conducted with GE crops, the fertility of mice fed with GE maize was found to be severely impaired, with fewer offspring being produced than by mice fed on natural crops.

Mice fed with GE maize had less offspring in the third and fourth generations, and these differences were statistically significant. Mice fed with non-GE maize reproduced more efficiently. This effect can be attributed to the difference in the food source.

"GE food appears to be acting as a birth control agent, potentially leading to infertility - if this is not reason enough to close down the whole biotech industry once and for all, I am not sure what kind of disaster we are waiting for," said Dr. Jan van Aken, GE expert at Greenpeace International. "Playing genetic roulette with our food crops is like playing Russian roulette with consumers and public health".

Owned by Monsanto, the GE maize variety tested in this study is tolerant to a herbicide and resistant to certain insect pests. It has been approved for planting and food use in a variety of countries, including the US, Argentina, Japan, Philippines and South Africa. In Mexico and the European Union, it is approved for food and feed use.

## RESOURCE

A documentary film made in France about Monsanto's history and current practices can be viewed at:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=6262083407501596844>

It provides a comprehensive overview (the film is almost 2 hours long) of Monsanto's early days as the chemical company that developed Agent Orange. It covers the dangers of Roundup herbicide, the regulatory revolving door between Monsanto and government regulators, the evolution of genetically engineered crops, the impacts on farmers internationally, and much more.

### Help Build the California GE-Free Network

As one of the largest agricultural economies in the world, California has the opportunity to become a leader in safeguarding our public and private lands, fisheries, forests, schools, gardens and nurseries from GE contamination.

If GE is an issue that you are concerned about and you are not already a member, sign on to the [Cal GE-Free list serve](#) to receive this newsletter.

To make a tax-deductible donation, send a check payable to Cal GE-Free to:  
15290 Coleman Valley Rd., Occidental, CA 95465.

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