



Californians  
For GE-Free  
Agriculture

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# Californians for GE-Free Agriculture

## NEWSLETTER NUMBER 13, July 2005

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Thanks to all of you who participated in the tremendous outcry against the recent introduction of anti-democratic legislation that would override county and city GE restrictions – an update is included below. PLEASE encourage anyone you know who is concerned about this issue to sign up for the Cal GE-Free list serve to receive updates and action alerts, as Cal GE-Free will continue to be the central network on this issue. Also, to support us in this important effort, please consider making a **donation**.

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Californians for GE-Free Agriculture is a coalition committed to ecologically responsible and economically viable agriculture. We provide education, training and resources in support of the rights of farmers and communities to protect themselves from the environmental, human health and economic risks of genetic engineering in agriculture.

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### Coalition Members

California Certified Organic Farmers

The Center for Environmental Health

Center for Food Safety

Community Alliance with Family Farms

Ecological Farming Association

Genetic Engineering Action Network

Occidental Arts and Ecology Center

Organic Consumers Association

Four Elements Farm

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### 1. Cal GE Free rallies to push back legislation that would override county bans

Last week, Cal GE-Free alerted you to a bill (AB 1508) that was going to be gutted and amended to include language that would override county and city laws to restrict GE crops. Due in part to a tremendous outcry of opposition from environmental, social justice, farming and health organizations, as well as many of you who flooded their representatives with calls, the bill was pulled from the agenda of the Senate Agriculture Committee's June 28th hearing. Unfortunately, the victory was brief – Senator Florez re-introduced the amendment, using bill (SB 1056), scheduled to be heard by the Assembly Agriculture Committee the very next day. This development, so late and so clearly in contravention of common legislative procedure, was further evidence that this is a sneak attack on democracy.

At the hearing, Chair Barbara Matthews decided to request a special hearing in light of the fact that official language was not available for consideration and due to the inadequate public notification. A special hearing requires the approval of the Speaker of the Assembly and no committee hearing has been scheduled, but preemption language could be still be introduced into a bill being heard on the floor of either the Senate or the Assembly up until the end of this session on September 9th. In either event, we will likely need all of you to flood your representatives with calls, letters and emails voicing your opposition. A very lengthy and diverse list of organizations has signed on to oppose this bill, including the League of California Cities, the California Native Plant Society, Public Citizen, CalPIRG, the Sierra Club, the Breast Cancer Fund, several local governments and politicians, and many more (see our web site for a complete list). Thank you for all of your work on this so far, and please stay tuned!

*For more information:*

Urge your friends, colleagues and neighbors to sign up for the **Cal GE-Free list serve**. We will be sending out an alert and posting to to the **preemption page** of our website as soon as we hear news.

## **2. Cal GE-Free Director presents at international GE-Free Zones forum**

At the end of May Cal GE-Free Director Renata Brillinger was invited to speak in conjunction with the UN Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety meeting, about the growing GE-free movement in California. The Cartagena Protocol, signed by 122 member states, is a supplementary agreement to the UN Convention on Biodiversity, and the only multilateral agreement seeking to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by **living modified organisms** resulting from modern biotechnology.

At the meeting, held in Montreal, Brazil and New Zealand drew harsh criticism for derailing the negotiations and their blocking of the consensus process raised concerns about the capacity of the Cartagena agreement to adequately protect producers around the world from unwanted GE contamination. The demonstrated failure of these negotiations only strengthens the rationale for citizens and groups around the world to protect themselves by establishing GE-free zones. To date, over 3500 regions in Europe have declared themselves GE-free, including the entire country of Croatia and most of Poland. In the Philippines, Bohol province has declared itself GE-free, the State of New South Wales in Australia has a three year ban in place, and GE-free zones exist in Canada, Costa Rica, Argentina and Brazil. An initiative has recently been launched in Canada to establish 50 GE-free zones there in the next year.

“California plays a crucial role in the international movement to resist the unwanted expansion of GE crops. This state is a powerful agricultural economy and establishing GE-free zones here both protects our farmers and sends a powerful message to the rest of the world that Americans are aware of and taking steps to prevent the negative economic, ecological and health impacts of GE crop technology” said Cal GE-Free Director Renata Brillinger, speaking at a forum that took place alongside the Montreal meeting.

*For more information about international GE-free zones:*

GE-free zones in Europe: <http://www.foeeurope.org/GMOs/gmofree/>

GE-free zones in Canada: <http://www.canadians.org>

If you are interested in working towards a GE-free zone in your community contact **Becky** at: (415) 561-2523.

## **3. Help build the Californians for GE-Free Agriculture grassroots 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 genetic engineering is an issue that you are concerned about and you want to get involved in local action, here are some steps to take:

- If you are not already a member, sign-on to the Cal GE-Free list serve [www.calgefree.org](http://www.calgefree.org) to receive this newsletter and action alerts.
- Contact Becky Tarbotton at (415) 561-2523 to find out whether there is an active GE-Free group in your area.
- If there is no GE-Free group in your area, consider asking local community groups (church groups, environmental groups etc.) to see if you could make a presentation to them about the issue. Cal GE-Free can help by providing information and talking points and offering suggestions.
- Festival season is here! Cal GE-Free can provide you with fliers, talking points and sign-up sheets to set up a table at your local festival or Earth

- Day celebration to connect with other activists interested in GE.
- Organize a screening or house party of the new 'The Future of Food' and use this as an opportunity to collect names of people who would be interested in starting a group.

Finally, please consider a donation to Californians for GE-Free Agriculture. You can make a secure, tax-deductible donation on line at:  
<https://secure.groundspring.org/dn/index.php?aid=2709>

- OR -

**Send a check payable to Cal GE-Free at:15290 Coleman Valley Rd.,  
Occidental, CA 95465**

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PLEASE FORWARD THIS EMAIL TO INTERESTED FRIENDS AND  
FAMILY!  
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**Californians for GE-Free Agriculture,  
15290 Coleman Valley Rd, Occidental, CA 95465 415-561-2523.  
<http://calgefree.org/>**

Thanks for your support!  
Becky Tarbotton  
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