



**Californians  
For GE-Free  
Agriculture**



# Californians for GE-Free Agriculture

**November/December 2005**

First of all, Happy Thanksgiving! This is a holiday near and dear to our hearts, a celebration of farming, bountiful harvest and community. Though we are blessed here in California with a year-round growing season, even for farmers and gardeners this time of year is a natural time for slowing down, reflecting, and expressing gratitude. We would like to thank you for your support of Californians for GE-Free Agriculture this year, and for making your concerns about genetic engineering known.

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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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This has been a big year for raising awareness about GE, and we have a lot to celebrate. Tens of thousands of Californians are much more conscious and informed than they were a year ago, and we know that the more people learn about GE, the more concerned they get.

There were three major developments in 2005 that Cal GE-Free was involved with:

1. The Farmer Protection Act (AB984) — This proposed state bill, introduced by Assemblymember John Laird, places the burden for genetic contamination on GE manufacturers rather than on farmers. Passage of this bill would mean farmers could argue for compensation for market losses if their GE-free crops were contaminated. The bill will be considered again in 2006. We believe this is a good first step towards needed state regulation on GE.
2. Sonoma County Campaign — In November, Sonoma County citizens voted against a ten-year moratorium on the production of GE organisms by a margin of 44% to 56%. People concerned about sustainable agriculture up and down the North Coast were disappointed by the lost opportunity to create a huge GE-free zone stretching from Marin to Mendocino. However, local GE-Free organizers were successful in raising awareness about the risks associated with genetically engineered crops and foods — more than 60,000 voters want Sonoma County GE-free! At least 500 volunteers were involved in the campaign, and many will continue to work together to protect the future of food and farming.
3. Protection of Local Democracy — In July, a sneaky attempt to

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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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override local bans on GE was made in the state legislature. Senator Dean Florez (backed by Monsanto, the Farm Bureau and the industrial agribusiness establishment) attempted to pass two bills (AB1508 and SB1056). They were unsuccessful for two reasons: (i) many diverse civil society organizations united to oppose this attack on local government; (ii) your calls and emails to your representatives sent a message that you are opposed to stripping local authority over GE in the absence of adequate state protections.

As we look ahead at 2006, there are three things we ask of you.

First, stay alert to the need to defend against state preemption of local government. We expect there will be another attempt to prohibit local GE regulation, and we will need your help to prevent it.

Second, in order to continue to build a unified voice of precaution about GE, we need to build a larger network of concerned organizations and individuals. Please encourage your family and friends to join Cal GE-Free's list serve, the best tool we have for alerting you to important developments — sign up at <http://www.calgefrees.org>.

Finally, please consider a generous year-end **donation** to support the work of Cal GE-Free. We are the only organization in the state dedicated solely to protecting California's food and farming future from the agricultural, environmental, and health risks of GE. Your contribution will enable us to continue educating and supporting farmers and communities in taking action to protect themselves from genetic engineering.

Once again, thank you for the work you have done this year to help ensure sustainable, GE-free food and farming. We wish you, your family and your community a joyous, healthy and abundant holiday season!

Sincerely,

Cal GE-Free staff and Steering Committee

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PLEASE FORWARD THIS EMAIL TO INTERESTED FRIENDS  
AND FAMILY!

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<http://calgefree.org/>**