



Californians
For GE-Free
Agriculture

DONATE NOW
SECURE DONATIONS
BY GROUNDSPRING.org

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.

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

Californians for GE-Free Agriculture

Newsletter #18, January 2006

NEWS

- **Ventria** cancels move to Missouri
- Cal GE-Free meets with **Japan's NO GMO!** Campaign
- **WTO** delays EU/USA GE dispute ruling

RESEARCH

- **USDA** Inspector General says regulators don't know what happens with pharmaceutical crops

TAKE ACTION

- **Protect** California's Food Safety Laws!
Help build the **California GE-Free Network**.

NEWS

Ventria Cancels Move to Missouri

Ventria Bioscience, the California-based Biotech company that has been trying to commercialize rice genetically engineered with human proteins for the past two years, has met with yet another obstacle. After being stalled in California in 2004, farmer and consumer opposition kept the company from planting pharmaceutical rice in Missouri in May 2005. Not daunted, Ventria kept pushing their agenda in Missouri, and with the help of promised government funding, succeeded in securing a place in the soon to be developed 'Missouri Center of Excellence' at Northwest Missouri State University.

When the deal was first announced, Ventria claimed that 2,000 acres of their pharma rice would be grown in Missouri in 2005, with Missouri farmers eventually growing more than 70% of Ventria's US field production. However, in the eleventh hour, Ventria has pulled out of the project and cancelled its move to the Northwest campus, and no pharmaceutical crops were grown in Missouri in 2005. This is another major victory for Missouri farmers, who have been working to protect their rice crops, and by extension their export markets,

from possible contamination by Ventria's pharmaceutical rice.

The Ventria situation will not likely disappear, in spite of all of the opposition they have met with in California and Missouri. The company also has a presence in North Carolina and could apply again for a permit to grow in California. We will continue to monitor their actions and call upon you to voice your opposition to their plans when needed!

For a news story on this issue:

<http://www.calgefree.org/news/2006/010306b.shtml>

Cal GE-Free Meets with Japan's NO GMO! Campaign

Cal GE-Free Campaign Coordinator Becky Tarbotton brought news of California's growing rejection of GE crops to an international workshop on GE-Rice held in Hong Kong in December in conjunction with the World Trade Organization's Sixth Ministerial. The meeting, organized by Japan's NO GMO! campaign together with the Seikatsu Club, brought together activists and farmers from around Asia to discuss the ramifications of the commercialization of GE Rice. Of particular concern is Bayer's 'Liberty Link' rice which has been deregulated in the US, although the company has held off on commercializing it until now. There is speculation that Bayer is awaiting signals that consumers will accept GE Rice before putting it on the market, but the message from Asia is uncompromising: "Rice is Life. No to GMOs".

Much of the rice grown in California is exported to Japan and consumers there are uncompromising in their rejection of the technology. Any possibility of GE contamination will threaten this valuable market. The work of the NO GMO! Campaign has put a stop to the development of all GE food crops inside Japan, and their main concern now is the cultivation and export to Japan of GE crops from the USA and Canada, especially rice. Said Mr. Keisuke Amagasa, President of the campaign: "International solidarity is what we need now to prevent the approval of GM crops developed and marketed by multinational companies".

*For more information about the NO GMO! Campaign e-mail **no-gmo@jca.apc.org***

WTO Continues to Delay EU/USA GE Dispute Ruling Amidst Rumors of a US Win.

In May 2003 the United States, supported by Canada, Argentina and initially Egypt, made a formal complaint to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) about Europe's stance on genetically engineered organisms. The US-led group alleged that the European Union (EU)

had refused to give approval to a number of new GE food, had stopped processing the applications for new GEOs and was not taking action to stop EU member states banning GE products. This, they argued, constituted a barrier to trade and was causing US farmers in particular to lose exports.

President Bush later added that the EU's moratorium was impeding efforts to feed the world. He stated that "European governments should join - not hinder -- the great cause of ending hunger in Africa." Ironically, just shortly after launching the dispute, the only African country in the coalition pulled out. Egypt cited "the need to preserve adequate and effective consumer and environmental protection" as the reason, fatally undermining the "feed the world" argument leveled by the US.

Despite rumours that the EU is likely to lose the dispute, and be compelled to lower barriers to GE crops, European consumers are adamant in their rejection of GE foods and are unlikely to purchase them. In a recent referendum, the Swiss voted for a five-year moratorium on commercial growing of GE crops. A 2005 European Commission opinion poll showed that 54% of citizens consider GE foods to be dangerous. Food companies are unlikely to start using GE ingredients in the face of consumer rejection of GM food – and even if they did, EU labelling laws mean that people will still be able to choose the non-GE option.

The ruling on the EU/USA dispute has been delayed several times but a draft is expected to be released in early February.

RESEARCH

USDA Inspector General Reports Failure in Oversight of GE Field Trials

A report released in late December by the Inspector General of the US Department of Agriculture reveals that the department "lacks basic information" on where field tests are, or what is done with the crops after they are harvested. The report was especially damning of USDA oversight of pharmaceutical crops, stating for example that auditors found two large harvests of pharmaceutical crops in storage at test sites without the USDA's knowledge or approval.

The report underscores the lack of government oversight on the introduction of biotechnology and reinforces the need for regional and local policies to ensure farmer and consumer safety and wellbeing. "Current (USDA) regulations, policies and procedures do not go far enough to ensure the safe introduction of agricultural biotechnology," the report said. The Cal GE-Free coalition is working with allies to develop a comprehensive policy platform for California, to address the gaps and inconsistencies in federal and state-level oversight of GE in agriculture.

For the complete story see:

<http://www.calgefree.org/news/2006/010306a.shtml>

For the USDA report: see:

<http://www.usda.gov/oig/webdocs/50601-08-TE.pdf>

Take Action

Protect California's Food Safety Laws!

A bill is pending in the United States House of Representatives that would void numerous California food safety laws, including the main target of the law, California's Proposition 65. Prop 65 is a well-established California food safety law that has been effective in labeling and reducing cancer-causing substances in our food and consumer products. The bill, H.R. 4167, does this by stripping away the power of states to regulate food safety. If passed, this 'Food Uniformity' bill would effectively pre-empt any state-level labeling or food safety standards for GE foods.

H.R. 4167, sponsored by Representative Mike Rogers (R-MI), passed the House Energy and Commerce Committee on December 15, 2005 without hearings or development of any record showing any need for the law, and is expected to be scheduled for a floor vote soon.

Cal GE-Free coalition member, the Center for Food Safety's True Food Network has set up an on-line action. Please click on the link below to contact your representatives now and urge them to vote NO on HR 4167!

Take Action at: http://ga3.org/campaign/fooduniformity_CA

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 want to get involved in local action, here are some steps to take:

- If you are a producer, vendor, store, or farmers market committed to growing and sourcing GE-Free (or if you know of one who is) - support and broadcast this commitment to healthy food and farming with a "Proud to be GE-Free" display sign from Cal GE-Free. Contact our office for more information, or take a look at it on our website (<http://www.calgefree.org/resources/proudtobegefree.shtml>)
- If you are not already a member, sign-on to the Cal GE-Free list serve www.calgefree.org to receive this newsletter and action alerts.
- Contact **Becky Tarbotton** at (510) 647-3733 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.

- 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

=====

PLEASE FORWARD THIS EMAIL TO INTERESTED FRIENDS
AND FAMILY!

=====

**Californians for GE-Free Agriculture,
15290 Coleman Valley Rd, Occidental, CA 95465 510-647-3733.
<http://calgefree.org/>**