



Californians for GE-Free Agriculture

- News in Genetic Engineering -

March 5, 2008

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Dear Renata,

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. And for more information, check out the [Cal GE-Free](#) web site.

Lake County Considering GE Ban

Organizers in Lake County plan to introduce a motion to their County Board of Supervisors in March 2008 that would ban the production of all GE organisms in the county. The Coalition for Responsible Agriculture attempted a ban on Roundup Ready alfalfa in 2005, but fell one vote short of the needed majority among their Supervisors then.

This county ordinance is the ninth attempted ban or restriction on GE crops at the county level in California since 2004. Four of those attempts - in Mendocino, Trinity, Marin and Santa Cruz - were successful. In 2005/06, a state bill was introduced to prohibit local restrictions on GE crops, but was fought and



defeated by a diverse coalition of organizations, businesses and individuals opposed to the undermining of local democratic governance. In 2007, a state bill was introduced to enact some protective measures for farmers, the environment and consumers. That bill is still under consideration (more information can be found on the Cal GE-Free web site).

For more information on the ordinance, and to lend your support, go to the Coalition's web site at <http://www.lakelive.org/cra>.

Take Action on GE Sugar!

Sugar in our candy, cereal, granola bars, crackers, bread - anything that contains sugar - comes from several sources, including sugar beets. In fact, about half of the sugar used in the U.S. is beet sugar (the other half is cane sugar). In the next few weeks, sugar beet seed farmers throughout the U.S. will be considering what type of sugar beets to plant, and food companies will have to decide what types of sugar they will accept.

A new option available this year is Monsanto's Roundup Ready sugar beet, genetically engineered to survive direct application of the weed killer, Roundup.

At the request of Monsanto, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency increased the allowable amount of glyphosate residues on sugar beetroots by a whopping 5000%. Glyphosate is the active ingredient in Roundup, sugar is extracted from the beet's root. The inevitable result is more glyphosate pesticide in our sugar. This is not good news for those who want to enjoy their sweet treats without the threat of ingesting toxic weed killer.

In 2001, Hershey's, M&M Mars, and American Crystal Sugar told consumers they would not use genetically engineered sugar. But now that sugar beets are close to being planted commercially, they have made no such assurances.

Tell Hershey's, Mars, and American Crystal to show us the love, and keep our sweets GE-Free!

Sign the petition now at <http://ga3.org/campaign/GEsugar>.

NEWS:

Unapproved GE Corn Contaminates Food Supply

On February 22, 2008, the USDA, EPA and FDA announced that an unapproved variety of GE corn had been discovered in three types of commercial corn seed stock and have been planted on approximately 53,000 U.S. acres over the past two years.

The corn is genetically engineered to contain an insecticide, and



was developed by Dow AgroSciences who detected the contamination. Dow has recalled all the affected seed that had not been planted, and are under investigation for violations.

As has become the Orwellian pattern with the federal agencies responsible for overseeing GE crops, the USDA, EPA and FDA responded to the contamination by asserting that the corn is completely safe for human consumption, that there are no plant pest or environmental concerns, and that the U.S. corn crop will not be affected.

The statement by the federal agencies can be found at:

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/6427a6b7538955c585257359003f0230/d6e59239f16a8fa1852573f7006c1fc3!OpenDocument>

A summary of the story and some news articles can be found at:

http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_10573.cfm



NEWS:

First Documented Case of Insect Resistance to GE Cotton

University of Arkansas entomologists have reported on the discovery of Bt-resistant bollworms in Mississippi and Arkansas.

A pest insect known as bollworm is the first to evolve resistance in the field to plants modified to produce an insecticide called Bt, according to a new research report by University of Arizona entomologists.

Bt-resistant populations of bollworm, *Helicoverpa zea*, were found in more than a dozen crop fields in Mississippi and Arkansas between 2003 and 2006.

"What we're seeing is evolution in action," said lead researcher Bruce Tabashnik, professor and head of the UA entomology department and an expert in insect resistance to insecticides. "This is the first documented case of field-evolved resistance to a Bt crop."

Bt crops are so named because they have been genetically altered to produce Bt toxins, which kill some insects. The toxins are produced in nature by the widespread bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis*, hence the abbreviation Bt.

Excerpted from:

<http://uanews.org/node/18178>

NEWS:

New Method for Producing High-Vitamin Corn

Could Improve Nutrition in Developing Countries

Note: This article describes a non-GE method for screening for corn with high levels of Vitamin A. For years, biotech researchers have been unsuccessfully trying to develop a viable variety of rice genetically engineered with high beta-carotene levels (a precursor to Vitamin A). This article describes a viable, cheap and non-GE way to achieve the goal of improving nutrition in developing countries.

Scientists at the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Cornell University have discovered how to amplify the vitamin A content of corn, providing a powerful new tool in the fight against deficiencies in dietary vitamin A.

Such deficiencies cause eye diseases, including blindness, in 40 million children annually, and increased health risks for about 250 million people, mostly in developing countries.

In the course of their research, the scientists have discovered "a new method of analyzing the genetic makeup of corn that will enable developing countries to identify and increase cultivation of corn that has naturally high levels of vitamin A precursors," says Ed Buckler, a co-leader of the research team from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service and Cornell University, in a National Science Foundation press release.

Corn is an essential part of the diets of hundreds of millions of people around the world, many of whom live in developing countries. It is the dominant subsistence crop in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, where 17 to 30 percent of children under age five are vitamin A deficient, says Buckler.

Regular consumption of adequate quantities of corn high in vitamin A precursors, which are converted in the human body into vitamin A, would reduce vitamin A deficiencies and associated health problems.

Buckler says that his team's method for analyzing the genetic makeup of corn is "much simpler and faster and up to 1,000-fold cheaper" than running the types of chemical tests that were previously available for identifying corn high in vitamin A precursors. He expects it to significantly accelerate the vitamin biofortification of corn crops.

Excerpted from the National Science Foundation press release:

http://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=110998&org=NSF&from=news

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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