



Californians for GE-Free Agriculture

- News in Genetic Engineering -

August 30, 2008

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE PASSES BILL PROTECTING FARMERS AGAINST "MONSANTO LAWSUITS"

**First State Bill Regarding Genetically Engineered Crops
Awaits Governor's Signature**

August 30, 2008 - A landmark piece of legislation protecting California's farmers from crippling lawsuits was passed through both legislative houses this week in an end-of-session flurry. The Senate voted 23 - 14 to support it, and the Assembly was unanimous in their support. The bill, AB 541 (Huffman, D-Marin/Sonoma), is now headed to the Governor's desk for his signature. Sponsored by diverse organizations, some of whom are traditionally opposed on farm issues, AB 541 is the first bill passed by the California legislature that brings much-needed regulation to genetically engineered (GE) crops.

"I am very pleased that my office, working with the stakeholders on both sides of this historically divisive issue, was able to find common ground and pass California's first legislation on genetic engineered crops," stated Assemblymember Huffman. "While there is still work to be done on other aspects of genetic engineering, AB 541 is an important step in establishing basic protections for California's farmers."

AB 541 enacts protections against lawsuits brought against California farmers who have not been able to prevent the inevitable - the drift of GE pollen or seed onto their land and the subsequent contamination of their non-GE crops. Currently, farmers with crops that become contaminated by patented seeds or pollen have been the target of harassing lawsuits brought by biotech patent holders, particularly Monsanto. The bill also establishes a mandatory crop sampling protocol to prevent biotech companies that are investigating alleged violations from sampling crops without the explicit permission of farmers.

AB 541 has the support of organizations traditionally on opposite sides of the GE issue, and its sponsors are confident that the Governor will sign it. The bill was sponsored by a thirteen-member coalition including Community Alliance with Family Farmers, Earthbound Farm, California Certified Organic Farmers, United Natural Foods Inc., as well as California Farmers Union and the California Farm Bureau, and several others.

"AB 541 is a move in the right direction," stated Renata Brillinger, director of the Genetic Engineering Policy Project, the coalition of organic and conventional farmers, food industry, environmental, and faith organizations sponsoring AB 541. "It provides much needed protection for farmers who typically lack the resources to fight lawsuits brought by biotech conglomerates."

A copy of the bill can be downloaded at: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov>

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GENETIC ENGINEERING POLICY PROJECT

California Certified Organic Farmers · California Church IMPACT · Center for Food Safety ·
Center for Environmental Health · Community Alliance with Family Farmers · Earthbound Farm ·
Ecological Farming Association · Environment California · Good Earth Natural Foods · Occidental Arts &
Ecology Center · Oakland Institute · Ocean Beach People's Organic Food Co-op ·
Pesticide Action Network North America · United Natural Foods, Inc.

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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