

Californians for GE-Free Agriculture

- News in Genetic Engineering -

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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.

GE Crops Cause Increased Pesticide Use

Genetically engineered (GE) corn, soybeans and cotton have led to an overall increase of 318 million pounds of weed-killing herbicides - a type of pesticide - over the first 13 years of commercial use (1996 - 2008). The findings released in a new report by The Organic Center titled "Impacts of Genetically Engineered Crops on Pesticide Use in the United States: The First Thirteen Years" were based on data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"The drastic increase in pesticide use with genetically engineered crops is due primarily to the rapid emergence of weeds resistant to glyphosate, the active ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup herbicide," said Dr. Charles Benbrook, report author and chief scientist of The Organic Center. "With glyphosate-resistant weeds now infesting millions of acres, farmers face rising costs coupled with sometimes major yield losses, and the environmental impact of weed management systems will surely rise."

The report was funded by a coalition of non-governmental organizations including the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Center for Food Safety, the Cornerstone Campaign, Californians for GE-Free Agriculture, Greenpeace International and Rural Advancement Fund International USA.

A copy of the report can be downloaded at www.organic-center.org.

Biotechnology & the Emerging Climate Market

As agricultural biotechnology stumbles in its quest to develop successful new traits for food crops (having accomplished only herbicide tolerance and Bt resistance on any commercially significant scale), the industry is now pursuing a new front: the need (real or perceived) for crops marketed to solve problems induced by changing climates. Field trial

data gives some indication of how strongly big biotech is counting on climate changes for their future sales: recent research is increasing for GE varieties that would be useful for changing climates, while field trials for the "traditional" GE varieties are stagnant or decreasing.

California is likely to be ground zero for development of genetic approaches that aim at the market for climate-ready crop "improvements." In 2007, oil giant BP announced its \$500 million deal with the UC system to launch an Energy Biosciences Institute (EBI), primarily for development of new biofuel technologies. The US Energy Department's Joint Bioenergy Institute is located in Emeryville, coordinating biotech energy research from Stanford, the UC system, three national labs, and the Carnegie Institute. Biotech corporations abound in California which is home to at least six leading biofuel and/or synthetic biology developers, most with ties to university and/or government biotech apparatus.

It is early to tell what impact developments in climate-related ag biotech will have on California farmers and consumers. But given the centrality of California as a testing ground, and the risks of these untested technologies to ecological farming and the environment in general, it is important to keep a close eye as the technology develops.

For the full story, see the Cal GE-Free web site at: www.calgefreesite.org.

Holiday Gifts!

The following are available for a \$20 donation to Cal GE-Free (including shipping), while supplies last:

1. **Seeds of Deception: Exposing Industry & Government Lies about the Safety of the Genetically Engineered Foods You're Eating.** Jeffrey Smith.
<http://www.seedsofdeception.com/Public/SeedsOfDeception/index.cfm>
2. **Fed Up! Genetic Engineering, Industrial Agriculture and Sustainable Alternatives.** VHS format. <http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/288283/Fed-Up-Genetic-Engineering-Industrial-Agriculture-and-Sustainable-Alternatives/overview>

Please send a check to:
Cal GE-Free
15290 Coleman Valley Rd.,
Occidental, CA 95465

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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