



Californians
For GE-Free
Agriculture

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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.

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

Californians for GE-Free Agriculture

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NEWS

California GE-Free tally grows!

GE-Free zones continue to spread across California, keeping up a steady drumbeat of resistance to the planting of GE-crops. It in the past three months, the city of Point Arena and the Farmers Market in Cambria (San Luis Obispo) declared themselves GE-Free bringing the current tally of GE-Free zones to three counties, two cities and ten Farmers Markets around California (Berkely, San Rafael Civic Center, Novato, Fairfax, Hayward, Oakland, Fremont/Irvington, Fremont/Centerville, SF and Cambria).

Alfalfa deregulated

The USDA has announced that herbicide-tolerant Roundup Ready alfalfa is officially deregulated, which means that it will be available to plant this coming fall, raising serious contamination concerns amongst producers in heavy alfalfa growing regions such as California and Oregon.

Alfalfa is the fourth largest crop in the USA and the first perennial crop to have been given non-regulated status by USDA/APHIS. It is grown in 50 states and raises particular concerns about contamination and creation of 'superweeds' because it becomes feral very easily and could become an herbicide-tolerant weed itself. Contamination of other alfalfa crops is almost guaranteed, which means that any dairy or beef cattle fed alfalfa in the US will potentially be ingesting genetically engineered crops. There are additional concerns that the introduction of GE alfalfa will virtually eliminate the possibility of organic honey because the crop is cross-pollinated by bees; as much as 30% of our honey relies on alfalfa pollen.

In an unprecedented twist, Forage Genetics, the patent holder for Roundup Ready alfalfa, has voluntarily agreed that Roundup Ready alfalfa will only be available this year for domestic use, not for export. It will not be available at all in the Imperial Valley, where a great deal of exported alfalfa is produced. This demonstrates awareness on their part (and the part

of the USDA) that export markets will not accept GE-alfalfa.

RESEARCH

Monsanto forced to release study revealing negative health effects of GE-corn

A study that Monsanto attempted to cover up has revealed that rats fed on a diet of GE-corn suffered severe health impacts and investigations show that these findings were misrepresented to European authorities during the regulatory process. The report confirmed claims made by prominent scientists who have found that animals fed a diet of GE corn (Mon 863, a variety of corn genetically engineered to produce a form of pesticide called bacillus thuringiensis (Bt), designed to attack a corn pest called root worm) developed severe side effects in the blood, kidney and liver and that humans eating the corn might also be at risk.

European regulators accepted the company's assurances that their corn is safe, in spite of the unscientific and contradictory rationale that was used to dismiss significant problems. During the regulatory process, Monsanto maintained that its 1,139-page report could not be released, even to the European Food Safety Authority, on the grounds that it "contains confidential business information which could be of commercial use to our competitors". Thanks to a German court ruling, Monsanto has been ordered to publicly expose the report, but the episode highlights the importance of impartial health and safety testing of GE-technology and the failure of current regulatory systems to act in the interests of citizens.

*For more information: **Revealed: health fears over secret study into GM food.** by Geoffrey Lean, Environment Editor, The Independent, UK.*

Organic comes out ahead of conventional farming in a 22-year-long study

The July issue of the journal Bioscience reviewed a 22-year field study by the Rodale Institute, which compared organic and conventional farming on similar plots of land with similar crops. The study found that organic methods built up higher levels of soil mass and biodiversity which then allowed the organic land to generate yields equal to or greater than the conventional crops. While conventional crops collapsed during drought years, organic fluctuated only slightly and over the 22-year period, organic crops used 30% less fossil energy inputs than conventional.

For more information:

<http://www.organicconsumers.org/organic/norm071805.cfm>

TAKE ACTION

Preemption resources:

As we enter into the final phase of the 2005 legislative session (August 15th-September 9th) Cal GE-Free will be on high alert watching for the introduction of preemptive language on the floor of either the Senate or the Assembly. In the event of introduction, we will be calling on you to flood your representatives with calls and messages opposing the overriding of local authority. In the meantime, we encourage you to contact your legislators to communicate that: Preemption undermines local control, strips local government authority on issues of health, safety and welfare,

and is a threat to participatory democracy. Contact Becky (becky@calgefree.org) for talking points and tips for meeting with your legislators. For background information and the national perspective on preemption, we recommend the toolkit produced by Environmental Commons (environmentalcommons.org).

Collaborate with your local Sierra Club chapter

The Sierra Club's Genetic Engineering Committee is working to provide assistance to other groups working on GE issues and to move the 700,000-member Club to prioritize GE in their public outreach and lobbying work. Contact your local chapter to find out if they already have a committee working on GE issues. If not, someone from your group can join the Sierra Club and start one. Funds are available to support even brand new committees. For further info, please contact the Sierra Club's Genetic Engineering Committee Chair Laurel Hopwood at lhopwood@adelphia.net, or check out the Sierra Club website for their policy on GE, www.sierraclub.org/biotech.

Heartland television program a showcase for Monsanto

This fall, Monsanto wants PBS and American Public Television to air a weekly series called "America's Heartland" celebrating industrial agriculture. Propaganda campaigns are not a new strategy for Monsanto. In Brazil, for example, the biotech company planned to fund the distribution of magazines with text and articles about agriculture to public schools until the Ministry of Culture declined support of the project. Nearly 70 organizations have sent letters to the U.S. public television networks expressing concern about the agribusiness bias to the new series. Add your voice to the many who don't want to watch Monsanto's propaganda!

To Send an Email: <http://ga3.org/campaign/pbsamericasheartland>

Help build the Californians for GE-Free Agriculture grassroots 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 not already a member, **sign-on to the Cal GE-Free list serve** to receive this newsletter and action alerts.
- Contact **Becky Tarbotton** at (415) 561-2523 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.
- Festival season is here! Cal GE-Free can provide you with fliers, talking points and sign-up sheets to set up a table at your local festival or Earth Day celebration to connect with other activists interested in GE.
- 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

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PLEASE FORWARD THIS EMAIL TO INTERESTED FRIENDS
AND FAMILY!

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**Californians for GE-Free Agriculture,
15290 Coleman Valley Rd, Occidental, CA 95465 415-561-2523.
<http://calgefree.org/>**

Thanks for your support!
Becky Tarbotton
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