

# Freeze Update

**Five year  
FREEZE**  
on genetic engineering and  
patenting in food and farming

## Stopping GM Contamination – we need your help

**D**espite the enormous success of the GM campaign in halting GM crop approvals and consumer pressure reducing the UK market for GM products to a mere handful of products and a significant amount of animal feed, future cultivation of GM crops cannot be ruled out just yet.

The earliest date for UK cultivation is 2008. Unfortunately, the Government has made it clear that they intend to allow GM crops to be grown if any reach the point where they have received the full set of regulatory approvals.

The Freeze will continue to oppose any GM approvals until all outstanding safety and ethical questions have been answered and there is a guarantee of consumer and farmer rights to choose GM-free. To achieve this either no GM crops should be allowed, or there have to be adequate protection measures along the food chain.

The Freeze would prefer the former solution but we have to recognise that this very pro-GM government has other ideas. In her GM policy statement in March 2004, DEFRA Secretary of State, Margaret Beckett, announced that the

government believe there are no inherent safety problems with GM crops but recognized that some people prefer to not to eat or grow GM crops.

DEFRA's solution is slowly emerging and it confirms our worst fears. The Freeze attended a recent meeting on the issue of the coexistence of GM and non-GM crops (including organic crops) in September.

DEFRA outlined their ideas on the contentious issue of coexistence. Of greatest concern was their policy to allow non-GM crops to be contaminated up to 0.9% (or nine seeds in every thousand) by adopting very short separation distances from the nearest GM crops, which reduce rather than prevent cross pollination. The maximum separation distance is likely to be a mere 200 metres despite the growing evidence that viable pollen can be transported several kilometres and no surety that low levels of GMOs will not harm public health or the environment.

The only rationale for selecting 0.9% is that it is the same as the threshold above which GM content of ingredients in food and feed have to be legally labelled.

Of equal concern, is DEFRA's intention to limit coexistence rules to the farm only, so there will be no laws in place to prevent contamination after harvest. There was also a clear indication that DEFRA believe that the threshold for organic crops is also 0.9%. Beekeepers and honey will not feature in the new laws because DEFRA say pollen is not an ingredient but an integral part of honey.

One minor positive point was that biotech companies will have to pay compensation to farmers whose crops have been contaminated by nearby GM crops.

This policy is likely to be published shortly in the form of a DEFRA public consultation on coexistence and liability. Eventually, new regulations will be placed before Parliament and the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament at which point our elected representatives can intervene on our behalf and demand that the Government must aim for no contamination of non-GM or organic crops.

If up to 0.9% contamination is permitted, this would mean that GM would creep into most parts of the food chain that use crops which have been subjected to genetic modification. It would also be a firm slap in the face for public opinion (see article on the latest consumer poll on page 3).

It is not too late to stop this. MPs, AMs and MSPs can intervene and ensure laws to prevent contamination are brought in, rather than ones that facilitate creeping contamination of our food, crops and seeds. We will send you details of how to take part in the consultation once they are published, probably later in the autumn.

### action...action...action...action...action...action...

- Write to your MP, and/or AM and MSP and demand that they will only support laws that prevent GM contamination and uphold the right to a genuine choice\*. You can find your MP's contact details at [www.locata.co.uk/commons/](http://www.locata.co.uk/commons/) or by calling 020 72194272
- Respond to DEFRA's impending consultation and send a copy to your elected representatives.
- Ask your local council to make their views known to the government.
- Alert others to what's happening by writing to you local paper.

\*Demanding zero contamination is not realistic with current analytical techniques which are too insensitive and because to prove it every seed on every plant or in every boat would have to be destroyed. The best available guarantee is that no GM is detectable at the current level of detection of 0.1%

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## ..news from Europe..

### Out-going Commissioners' parting shot on GM

On the 8th September the out-going European Commission voted to allow 17 varieties of Monsanto's Mon 810 GM maize to be added to the European Common Catalogue of Seeds, making a GM seed commercially available across Europe for the first time. The GM maize varieties had already been approved in France and Spain and the Commission argued that adding them to the common catalogue was just a formality.

However, only Denmark has so far put laws covering the co-existence of GM and non-GM crops in place and so the Commission's decision to make the seeds available could lead to contamination of conventional crops if it is grown. DEFRA has confirmed that it is highly unlikely that UK farmers would grow the maize as it is modified to be resistant to pests that do not occur here.

### In-coming Commissioner's cautious approach welcomed

At the same meeting on 8th September the Commission was due to vote on a proposal to allow between 0.3% and 0.5% GM contamination of non-GM and organic seeds before they would have to be labelled as containing GM material. This would mean that all possibilities of a genuine GM-free choice would be lost even before the seeds were grown. After fierce disagreement within the Commission and heavy lobbying from organisations all over Europe, including the Freeze, the Commission dropped the proposal, thus leaving it for the incoming Commissioners to take forward when they take up their posts in November.

The in-coming Commissioner for Agriculture and Development, Mariann Fischer Boel, has said that she favours seed contamination levels being set at the lowest possible level. Ms Boel successfully helped to negotiate co-existence rules in Denmark that aim for the lowest detectable limit of 0.1%. It looks like the battle within the Commission will continue to rage on this issue.

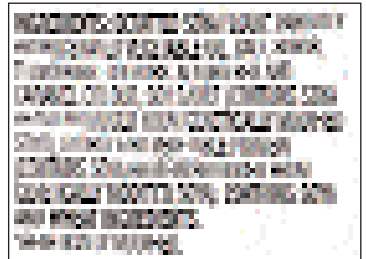
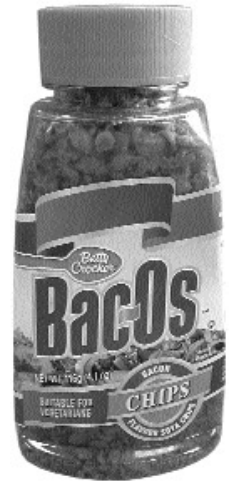
## What's on the label? How to identify GM ingredients in your shopping

Last month one of our readers asked us how GM ingredients are identified on product labels, so that he could be sure to avoid them. Thanks to consumer pressure there are very few GM products available here and Friends of the Earth has identified only the five products in the box below as being available in UK supermarkets.

Any ingredient that is known to be GM has to be labelled as such, regardless of the amount of GM material it contains. Accidental or technically unavoidable GM contamination of a non-GM ingredient below 0.9% does not have to be labelled as GM, but does have to be if it is over 0.9%. Modified starch is a commonly used ingredient but is not necessarily GM. GM modified starch would have to be labelled as such.

If it does qualify to be labelled as GM then, within the ingredients list, you will normally see something like 'Soya flour \*' and then '\* Genetically modified'. See the example opposite taken from Betty Crocker's Bac-Os.

We need to continue to let the supermarkets and producers know that we do not want GM products on the shelves. If you find any of the above products in your local supermarket, either write or speak to the store manager, telling them why you do not want to see GM products in the store. If you find any new products not listed below then please let us know so that we can add them to the list.



Brand name	Product	Supermarket
Betty Crocker	Bac-Os 'bacon' bits	Sainsbury's, Tesco, Safeway, Budgens, Morrisons
Supercook	Easy Colour spray	Sainsbury's, Somerfield, Safeway
Orville Redenbacher	Popcorn cakes: caramel flavour	Tesco
Taiko	Vegetarian Sushi with pickled vegetables	Waitrose
Schwartz	Bacon flavour bits salad topping	Sainsbury's, Tesco, Morrisons, Safeway, Co-op

## Film review

### The Future of Food – a film from the US by Deborah Koons Garcia

A small group of US farmers standing silent next to their tractors unable to speak to the camera about their experiences of GM crops is one of the most enduring images of The Future of Food film. Their silence was part a court settlement forced upon them by Monsanto when their crops were contaminated with the company's GM traits.

Keeping silent is not something that Percy Schmeiser and family were prepared to do as they fought Monsanto all the way to Canadian Supreme Court. Their emotions are obvious as they tell of their court battles with Monsanto over who owns the

canola seed they believe was shed on to their land by passing lorries.

The Future of Food tells the story of GM crops through interviews with academics and activists in a highly viewable way. One is left wondering why most of the US's populous have been silent for so long. We can only hope things will change.

You can see more about The Future of Food at [www.thefutureoffood.com](http://www.thefutureoffood.com) where you can also order a copy. Remember to ask for a PAL version so it is compatible with European technology.

# Which? Survey Confirms: Attitudes are Hardening

The September edition of consumer magazine Which? published the results of its latest survey on consumer attitudes to GM food. The survey of 1000 adults asked the same questions as one carried out in 2002 to allow a comparison of results to see whether views have changed in that time.

In a blow to recent Government attempts to ware down public opposition to GM, the results clearly show that people are more concerned than they were two years ago about the use of GM technology in food.

The survey also shows that 68% of those questioned want retailers and manufacturers to obtain animal feed from non-GM sources, so that meat and dairy

products are GM-free. There is still widespread concern about the lack of knowledge about the impact of GM, with 73% of respondents concerned that not enough is known about the long-term consequences for human health. 64% responded that not enough is known about the impact of GM on the environment and on food safety.

New public attitude research, funded by DEFRA and quietly placed on their website, confirms strong opposition to GM and scepticism about any benefits, strong support for accurate labelling and a willingness to pay extra for lower GM thresholds. (See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/gm/research/epg-1-5-213.htm>).

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## ...news...

### Consumers call for global GM moratorium

On 10th October Thailand Consumers International, a worldwide federation of consumer organisations, launched a campaign for a global moratorium on GM until internationally agreed regulations are in place and there are clear benefits to consumers, farmers and the environment.

The campaign will focus on ensuring that all GM foods are subjected to rigorous, independent safety testing, are adequately labelled and are traceable back to their origin and that producers are held liable for any environmental or health damage they cause.

### US county bans GM

Trinity County in California has become the second county in the US to ban the production of GM crops and animals in an effort to protect their local economy and environment.

### Hawaiians dump contaminated papaya

Independent testing on Hawaii has revealed widespread GM contamination of non-GM papaya and papaya seeds.

Angry farmers, consumers and backyard growers took their contaminated papayas back to the University of Hawaii, which created and released the GM variety, and demanded that the University come up with a clean-up plan.

The coalition also called for liability protection for local growers and the prevention of GM contamination of other Hawaiian commodity crops.

Mark Query of GMO-Free Hawaii said "Papaya contamination is a case study in the threat that GMO contamination presents to local agriculture. It is now clear that coexistence of traditional and GMO crops is impossible".

## GM rice, anyone?

**Ricarda Steinbrecher from EcoNexus reports on her recent meetings with government and small farmers in the Philippines.**

The Asian Peoples Caravan 2004 for Food Sovereignty has just come to an end in Nepal. This September small farmers and communities all across SE Asia shared their experiences and stated clearly, that GM and pesticides are eroding sustainable farming and food security.

In April, over 30 Asian farmers and grassroots groups sent protest letters against GM rice to Hilary Benn, UK Minister for International Development: "The real cause for hunger, malnutrition and poverty is the destruction of biodiversity and the exploitative production and market driven agricultural food policies. Asian peasants have been able to provide their own food with their own resources. Hunger and malnutrition is not a matter of food shortage in general, but a distribution and access problem.

Genetic engineering cannot solve this problem."

Small farmers in the Philippines want to get out of the trap of high input varieties, chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Their vision is to breed appropriate new varieties from traditional cultivars and develop or acquire low-tech solutions to restore the land and enable sustainable farming. Unfortunately farmers are not being informed by seed merchants and companies about what the new supposed "miracle" seeds really are, and they are buying them with loans from industry-linked micro-credit institutions. Now farmers' organisations and grassroots groups are taking it upon themselves to educate each other – and no one wants GM seeds and crops once they know what they are.

Meanwhile in Europe Bayer is pushing for market approval of its glufosinate tolerant GM "LLrice62".

## ...new reports...

### Growing GM Crops: the need for contamination and liability rules

Genewatch UK Briefing 29.

Available from [www.genewatch.org](http://www.genewatch.org) or by calling 01298 871898.

### Genome Scrambling – Myth or Reality? Transformation-Induced Mutations in Transgenic Crop Plants

EcoNexus Technical Report. Allison Wilson, Jonathan Latham and Ricarda Steinbrecher. Available by calling 0845 4569328.

# Scarecrows do it for a GM-Free Britain

Scarecrows, famed for protecting crops from pests, are set to join the campaign to prevent GM contamination in Britain (see page 1).

A new web site at [www.GMfreeScarecrows.org](http://www.GMfreeScarecrows.org) was launched in October by Friends of the Earth following the first appearance of anti-GM scarecrows outside Parliament in July.

It is hoped scarecrows will join campaigners across the country to demand the right to grow and buy food with no detectable GM content. The first opportunity for scarecrows to gather in numbers (what is the collective noun for scarecrows?) will be a Friends of the Earth national Day of Action on Saturday 30th October to demand that MPs and Assembly Members in Wales make a commitment to oppose any legislation which would legitimise GM contamination

of growing crops. An action pack is available via the website or from Friends of the Earth ([liwz@foe.co.uk](mailto:liwz@foe.co.uk) or phone Liz Wright on 0113 242 8153).

There is also The Scarecrows Action Guide available which is full of ideas on how to maximize the use of the scarecrow as a GM icon over the next year or so. Scarecrows are very photogenic and can pop up all over the place to reinforce the GM free message to politicians, such as front gardens, roundabouts, farmers' markets and MP's surgeries.

They are cheap and fun to make so please consider getting involved in the next few months as we move towards the next big event a full scale lobby of Parliament on 23rd February 2005. More information on the lobby will follow.

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## WTO GM dispute panel requests scientific advice

The WTO panel that will rule on the US-led challenge to the EU's de facto moratorium on GM has significantly delayed the outcome of the case by calling in scientists to debate the safety of GM food and crops. This move has been welcomed by environmental groups across Europe.

Although the US wanted to prevent the panel from consulting scientists, as they said there was no need or value in doing so, the panel has decided that the case does raise scientific and technical issues on which they might benefit from scientific advice.

All sides in the dispute now have to agree which scientists will be consulted and which questions they will address. It is anticipated that this process alone could take several months and a ruling is now not expected until well in to next year.

In the meantime, supporters of the Freeze, the Women's Environmental Network and the National Federation of Women's Institutes have all been writing to the US, Canadian and Argentinean Embassies to express their concerns. Thanks to those of you who sent us copies of replies you

received from the Canadian embassy. If any one has received any response from the US or Argentinean embassies then we would love to hear from you.

The Freeze, GeneWatch, the RSPB and FIELD (Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development) wrote to the US ambassador asking if he would meet us and Gregory Barker MP for Bexhill and Battle to discuss the case.

After a long pause we received a note to say that the Embassy receives too much correspondence to reply individually, but that our concerns have been noted. We don't think that's good enough, so will be writing again to the ambassador to ask for a detailed response to our letter.

**Stay in touch!** If you don't normally receive this bi-monthly newsletter and would like to, please send £5 (to cover costs, made payable to Five Year Freeze) to **Five Year Freeze, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF**

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### The Supporters of The Five Year Freeze are:

Action Aid, Action Against Allergy, Additives Survivors' Network, African Initiatives, Agricultural Christian Fellowship, Baby Milk Action, Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union, Biodynamic Agricultural Association, Black Environmental Network, Body Shop International PLC, British Allergy Foundation, British Association of Fair Trade Shops, British Association of Nature Conservation, British Naturopathic Association, Caduceus, Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales, Catholic Institute International Relations, Centre for Alternative Technology, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, Christian Aid, Christian Ecology Link, Communities Against Toxics, Compassion In World Farming, Corporate Watch, Council for the Protection of Rural England, Culpepers, Ecologist, Ecology Building Society, Elm Farm Research Centre, Ethical Consumer, Econexus, FARM, Farm-A-Round Ltd, Farming and Livestock Concern, Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, Find Your Feet, Food Commission, Food for Health Network, Food Poverty Network, Forum for the Future, Fresh Food Company, Freshlands UK, Friends of the Earth, Friends of the Earth Scotland, Gaia Foundation, Gardeners GMO Group, GE Free Forests, Genetics Food Alert, Genetics Forum, GeneWatch UK, GM-Free Cymru, GMO Campaign, Good Gardeners Association, Green & Blacks, Green Books, Green Network, Green Party, Greenpeace, Guild of Fine Food Retailers, Guild of Food Writers, Harvest Help, HDRA, Health Food Manufacturer's Association, HIPPO, Hyperactive Children's Support Group, Iceland Foods, Institute for Science in Society, Intermediate Technology Development Group, International Society for Ecology and Culture, Islamic Concern, Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environment Sciences, Living Lightly, Local Government Association, Longhouse Food Consultancy, Maternity Alliance, Medact, National Association of Health Stores, National Federation of Women's Institutes, National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd, Natural Law Party, Natures Store Ltd., Neal's Yard Bakery, Neal's Yard Remedies, New Economics Foundation, New Internationalist, Noah Project, Organic Farm Foods Wales, Organic Gardening, Organic Shop, Organics Direct, Oxfam, People & Planet, Permaculture Association UK, Permaculture Magazine, Permanent Publications, Pesticides Action Network UK, Plamil Food, Planet Organic, Positive News, Pret A Manger, Pro-natural Food Scotland, Resurgence, Scientists for Global Responsibility, Scottish Beekeepers Association, Small Farms Association, Soil Association, Student Environment Network, TGWU, The Harbour, Townswomen's Guilds, Traidcraft Plc, Triodos Bank, UNISON, Vegan Society, Vegetarian Society, Network UK, Vinceremos Wines & Spirits Ltd, Welsh Beekeepers Association, Whole Earth Foods Ltd, Wholesome Food Association, Wildlife Trusts, Womankind Worldwide, Women's Environmental Network, Woodland Trust, World Development Movement, World Wide Fund for Nature.

The Five Year Freeze is also supported by over 50 local authorities and 200 wholefood shops, restaurants and other local businesses.

In supporting the Five Year Freeze each of the above organisations is indicating its formal support in those areas where it has specific competence. Each also acknowledges the arguments of the other supporters of the Five Year Freeze in their respective fields in relation to the campaign. In addition each organisation supports the overall call for a Five Year Freeze.