Thin Ice

GM FREEZE
for a responsible, fair and sustainable food system

The GM Freeze newsletter *Issue 69 December 2025*

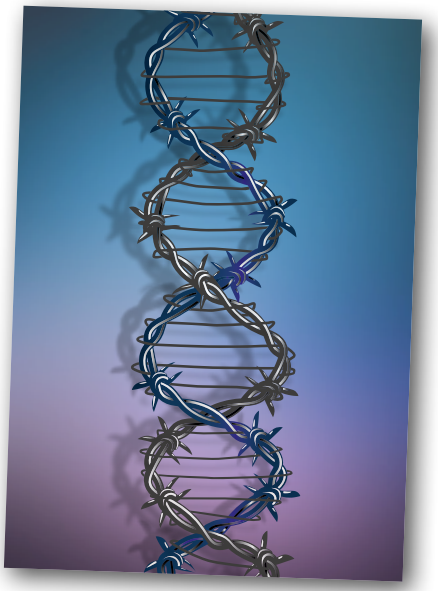
This changes everything

The Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Regulations were laid before Parliament in February, sailed through both Houses in April, were signed into law in May and came into force on the 13th of November. They couldn't be much worse.

There will be no segregation, labelling or traceability of new Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), nor any environmental or health risk assessments. Farmers and seed breeders will be exposed to the risk of patent lawsuits, and the whole non-GMO sector (including organic) is betrayed by the lack of measures to protect against contamination.

In a last-ditch attempt to get some safeguards baked into the system, we wrote to the new top brass at the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), urging them to review the process and consider some protective measures.

We sent them our report, *Disaster by design: the UK's new rules for new GMOs*, which outlines the many problems with the newly deregulated system, and highlights the ways in which it fails to ensure that environmental, health and socio-economic risks will be adequately managed—see page 14. We



encourage you to share the report with your elected representatives too.

Despite the fact that the outlook has taken a massive turn for the worse, we remain committed to working for Food and Seed Sovereignty, agroecology and an end to biopiracy and patents on life. We don't think GMOs have a place in this vision, so we'll continue to oppose them whatever the odds.

We've been talking to people along supply chains—from seed breeders to retailers—about how we can maintain the integrity of GM-free food and respect consumer freedom of choice—see page 6. Stick with us.

Support the fight against hidden GMOs

In August, Beyond GM took a major step forward in challenging the Government's removal of protections against new GMOs as it filed a legal case and over 700 pages of evidence with the High Court.

A crowd-funded campaign towards costs has raised over £53,000 from more than 900 people, sending a strong signal to government and the media that it's an issue people care deeply about.

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Member's Profile:

ORGANIC RESEARCH CENTRE

The Organic Research Centre (ORC) is the UK's leading organic research organisation. Over the last 45 years or so, their research and knowledge exchange has helped to change the future of food and farming.

GM Freeze spoke to ORC Director Lucy MacLennan to find out more.

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ORC Director Lucy MacLennan

Also in this issue:

- Government bans safety testing of new GMOs
- Problems and a paradox as new GMOs are deregulated
- GMO advisory body tied in knots
- Seeds, solidarity and Food Sovereignty in Palestine
- Nature conservation authority divided on GM in the wild
- The third Nyéléni Global Forum for Food Sovereignty
- Film review: *Percy vs Goliath*

This issue of Thin Ice was written and edited by Leonie Nimmo and Rebecca Dearden

Member's Profile ...
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The ORC has had an interesting history. How did your work begin?

ORC was born as a response to the oil crisis of the 1970s. David Astor and Lawrence Woodward started to think about how farmers could grow food without being dependent on oil and other finite resources. They recognised the need for organic farming research and advice in the context of UK agriculture.

In 1980 they set up The Progressive Farming Trust—an educational charity with a focus on developing and promoting organic agriculture. They bought the 237-acre Elm Farm near Newbury in Berkshire, which was to be our base for the next 40 years, and Elm Farm Research Centre was founded.

EFRC developed a strong research programme, launched a soil analysis service for organic farmers, and set up the Organic Advisory Service. In 2006, we became the Organic Research Centre, and relocated to Cirencester in 2020. Since COVID our researchers have been home-based and work remotely, with trials work being carried out on farms all over the country.

How does the ORC contribute to a more sustainable food system?

Our vision is to deliver the transition to naturally healthy and resilient farming systems. This is unashamedly an organic vision. Having contributed to the development of organic standards, we continually strive to develop and demonstrate best agricultural practice. This covers everything from soil health to agroforestry, crop diversity to animal wellbeing.

We continue to research organic and agroecological farming methods to improve the uptake, efficiency and development of organic farming, and to help agriculture fulfil the Organic Principles of Health, Ecology, Fairness and Care.

How is the issue of genetic modification relevant to your organisation?

Our stance on genetic modification arises from the Organic Principle of Care, and the Precautionary Principle. Organic agriculture should prevent significant risks by adopting appropriate technologies and rejecting unpredictable ones, such as GM. Back in 1990 we were one of the first international organic bodies, and the first in the UK, to oppose GM.

We believe that organic farming needs a diversity-based and inclusive approach, and for deep integration of plant breeding and cropping system design. This means broadening and optimising varietal choice; diversifying plant breeding strategies including using genetically heterogeneous crops; expanding the range of available crop species; providing varied strategies for crop protection and weed control, and optimising the use of cover crops in rotations.

Is there a particular success story you'd like to share?

Many of the ideas we've been researching and advocating for years, such as agroforestry, intercropping, undersowing, and the use of legumes, have come more into the mainstream. That is a huge legacy of the pioneering work of Professor Martin Wolfe, who was an integral part of the ORC for over 25 years, as well as our research teams past and present.

As a result of Martin's work and ORC trials at Wakelyns, we were able to convince EU officials to allow a trial period for marketing 'varieties' (populations) that don't fit the normal rules and regulations. Thus, in 2015 we launched the 'ORC Wakelyns Population', a hugely diverse population of wheat suited to organic and low-input farming systems. The success of the Wakelyns population (colloquially referred to as 'YQ') and other diverse populations has paved the way for the UK Grain Lab and others to follow. It demonstrates that agrobiodiversity offers an alternative pathway to monocrops and GM crops.

What's next for the ORC, Lucy?

We pledge our continued commitment to organic research, to support and develop the sector. In September 2025, ORC joined the agricultural and environmental consultancy ADAS. Running a small research organisation is financially challenging so this should ensure a sustainable future for our work and the opportunity to grow our team to produce more valuable applied research into low input agricultural practices.

If you are a member of GM Freeze and would like to be featured here, get in touch!

Martin Wolfe with ORC Wakelyns population wheat

England bans safety testing for new GMOs

New legislation strips away vital safeguards on genetically engineered plants

The Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023 exempts so-called "Precision Bred" Genetically Modified Organisms (PB-GMOs) from the regulations that govern traditional GMOs. The government claims that these organisms are no more risky than conventionally-bred ones.

The Regulations, which bring the GenTech Act into force, were signed into law in May 2025. Campaigners were surprised to discover that they contained a "nasty clause"—one that had not previously been disclosed, which was well-buried in the 39-page document.

It stipulates that the Secretary of State "must... not apply any test in connection with these requirements which would not otherwise be applicable in relation to any food or feed produced from organisms which are not produced from the application of modern biotechnology".

In effect, it forbids government agencies from requiring any tests on PB-GMOs that aren't applied to conventional crops.

According to GM Watch: "This is an extraordinary stipulation. It assumes, without requiring confirmatory testing, that PB-GMOs are completely equivalent to traditionally-bred organisms. And worryingly, it bans the regulator from ever finding out that the genetic engineering processes used to create the PB-GMO have caused unintended changes that could endanger human or animal health or the environment."

Professor Michael Antoniou, of King's College London, warned that the government was tying regulators' hands behind their backs. "Any responsible scientist would be horrified," he said.

Furthermore, the law gives the Secretary of State the power to authorise PB-GMOs if it merely "appears" they pose no risks. This wording is dangerously subjective, and placing human and environmental health in the hands of individual ministers, without risk assessment processes in place, is irresponsible.

Traceability rules have also been dismantled. This virtually guarantees that any health or environmental harms will be impossible to trace back to their source.

The legislation is a gift to biotech companies and a betrayal of the public interest. By discarding oversight and transparency, the UK has positioned itself as an outlier, taking a high-risk gamble with food safety and environmental protection.

Taking action to stop GM trees

In September, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) ran a consultation on whether newer forms of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) should continue to be considered GMOs.

GM Freeze, along with other environmental organisations, campaigned to urge groups to respond to the consultation, in a bid to stop the introduction of GMO trees—a move that would threaten forests, ecosystems, local communities and indigenous people.

In a forest context, the uncontrolled release of GMOs is particularly dangerous as the consequences could be ecosystem-wide and could impact large numbers of species and a range of livelihoods. The lifespan of trees means that it is impossible to fully assess the long-term risks, as it isn't possible to monitor the impact of genetic changes on subsequent generations.

For more info on GM trees see: stopgetrees.org

Support the fight ...
continued from page 1

"I think citizens really get the importance of this and we've been bowled over by the support we have had so far," said Pat Thomas, Director at Beyond GM.

But the campaign group still has some way to go before it reaches its target of £85,000. You can support the action by donating to the fighting fund at CrowdJustice.

Champions and supporters in the case represent a powerful alliance of civil society, consumers, farmers and farm businesses, "all united," says Beyond GM, "in defending the integrity of our food system, the rights of the public and the protection of the environment."

In a statement of support, GM Freeze said: "Test tube technofixes will not solve climate change or the systemic problems caused by our industrialised food system. This legal action is a necessary step to stop the government in its tracks and prevent the exposure of our economy, health and natural environment to unnecessary risks."

Please help support the campaign!

- For more information visit the Stop Hidden GMOs campaign website: stophiddengmos.uk
- Sign the joint GM Freeze and Beyond GM petition calling for labelling: stophiddengmos.uk/sign-the-petition
- Donate to the legal challenge via CrowdJustice: www.crowdjustice.com/case/stop-hidden-gmos/
- Help spread the word!

Westminster Forum event on gene editing

Leonie Nimmo reflects on problems and a paradox

In April, the Westminster Food & Nutrition Forum hosted a conference to discuss the next steps for gene editing—new GMOs—in the UK. The Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Regulations (GenTech Regulations) were making their way through parliament, and I attended to find out more about the perspectives of the government, industry and other organisations that were represented.

Our initial report about the meeting highlighted many of the issues raised—issues that we and others have long been reporting on—including the government's refusal to label new GMOs, the likely disruptions in trade as a result of their deregulation in the UK, and contamination. This article further reflects on some issues and insights.

Patronising the public

It was remarkable that Gideon Henderson, who was then Chief Scientific Advisor to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), used a discredited poll to make claims about public opinion in relation to new GMOs.

The Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee produced a damning report on the GenTech Regulations that drew particular attention to DEFRA's refusal to publish the poll in question. However, its chair, Dr Mark Pack, used polling transparency rules to force its publication by the pollster YouGov. It turns out that only half of just 2,000 people surveyed had heard of genome/gene editing. They were also given positives about the technology and no possible concerns.

This approach, of telling people about the benefits of new GMOs without mentioning risks or disputed issues, was familiar to Duncan Ribbons of the biotech company Tropic Biosciences. He said it was hard to educate consumers from a scientific perspective, whereas issues framed in terms of benefits were more readily understood and accepted. Dr Fere Malekpour from Beehive Innovations also stressed the need for highlighting the benefits when talking to the public about the science.

But even DEFRA's discredited poll found that nearly half (43%) of the tiny sample polled didn't support the use of new GMOs in food. Should this data really be used by DEFRA's Chief Scientific Advisor to claim public support for new GMOs? One would hope that his analysis of scientific data is more robust than his interpretation of polls.

What rot!

Tropic Biosciences is based in Norwich but was co-founded by a former Israeli Navy ship commander and has a board chairman who is an advisor to the Israeli Prime Minister's Office. Tropic has developed a non-browning banana that has received some positive attention in the British press for its claimed potential to reduce food waste.

Three examples of gene-edited fruit and vegetables were presented during the conference, and another of these had also been genetically modified to prevent discolouration: a non-bruising potato being developed by Beehive Innovations.

Both bruising and browning happen for a reason—they indicate that a fruit or vegetable has either been damaged or is not fresh. In both cases, the discolouration indicates that the food is rotting. In preventing the discolouration, do the genetic modifications also prevent decomposition? Or will they result in people eating rotting food that they would otherwise choose to avoid?

Either way, the technology could be of benefit to food manufacturers, who would be able to sell food that was not visibly decomposing, or not worry about the way food was handled because it would be more able to tolerate knocks. Thus, there will be more profit and less food waste—the only issue that the mainstream media appears interested in highlighting in relation to such products. But the development of these traits may reflect where power lies in the food industry and what manufacturers want rather than any sustainability purpose.

I asked questions of both Duncan Ribbons from Tropic and Dr Fere Malekpour from Beehive in an attempt to clarify the relationships between the genetic modifications, the rotting process and the nutritional value of the fruit or vegetable.

Ribbons claimed there would be no change to the nutritional value of the fruit if it was stopped from browning or bruising. However, the length of time after harvesting has a direct impact on the nutritional value of fruit. So, if I understood Ribbons' answer correctly, a GM, non-browning banana that was sold an extended period of time after harvesting would have the same nutritional content as a visibly decaying conventional banana.

I asked Dr Malekpour if the potatoes she was developing would look nutritionally healthy even if they were bruised and less nutritious and the answer was" "Potentially, yes..."

It would therefore seem that the genetic modifications don't prevent decomposition, only the appearance of decomposition. If so, I wonder how they would taste? And if not, what are the environmental implications of food that is not biodegradable?

Should anyone from Tropic or Beehive wish to confirm or clarify, we'd like to hear from them.

The patent paradox

The conference highlighted what is likely to become a major issue for the food production sector in the wake of the GenTech legislation: patents.

New GMOs—in the UK at least—are almost certain to be patented. It is supposedly not possible to patent purely biological processes, but this creates a logical inconsistency, because the definition of a "Precision Bred Organism" is that it could have been produced by a purely biological process—traditional breeding.

Patents on new GMOs have an

impact on traditional breeding, because the traits that are developed can be patented and, if these can be achieved through traditional breeding, then the traditional breeding will be affected by the patents.

Although Siân Edmonds, the lawyer who was at the conference to explain the issues around patents, was—remarkably—unaware of this, it is an issue that was very familiar to one of the panel members, Professor Cathie Martin.

Martin is a scientist working at the John Innes Centre in Norwich who, for around 20 years, has been developing GM tomatoes. In 2024, the seeds of her purple tomatoes were sold for the first time, in the USA, by her company Norfolk Healthy Produce (NHP).

Hot on the heels of the product launch was a patent infringement lawsuit against the Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company, that was selling purple tomato seeds it claimed were produced conventionally. According to Baker Creek, tests of its tomato did not conclusively find evidence of NHP's genetically modified material, but nor could it be proved that it was free of it. The Baker Creek tomato was withdrawn.

The European group No Patents on Seeds has sounded the alarm about companies using genetic engineering to reproduce gene variants and traits found in existing plant populations and claiming them as technical inventions, and then patenting them.

When asked whether she believed that the tomatoes she was developing could have occurred through traditional breeding, Martin answered: "Yes, absolutely." She went on to explain: "We've actually got a project to try and screen for natural variants, having shown that we can produce them by editing."

Martin and her team have two reasons for finding their genetically engineered traits in conventionally-bred varieties: firstly, to prove that they could occur through traditional breeding, and secondly to prevent them being produced through conventional breeding by threatening lawsuits. In doing so, they will secure the market, prevent the development of natural biological diversity, and lay claim to seeds that have been developed by our ancestors over millennia.

The real story?

It is GM Freeze's suspicion that, given the apparent slim pickings that gene editing is currently able to offer in terms of products, the underlying business model for biotech companies is not that of selling seeds or food, but of breeding patents.

See the GM Promises website for case studies of previous GM experiments that never came to fruition: gmopromises.org

Seed solidarity blocks harmful text in UK-India trade deal

In July 2025, the UK signed a trade deal with India, and it did not contain provisions that would have forced India to implement harmful seed laws. Transform Trade, which fights for trade that values people over profit, have claimed it as a huge win for farmers' seed rights in India and for people power in the UK.

Transform Trade, formerly Traidcraft, had helped expose how UK trade rules are spreading restrictive laws around the world that are based on the *International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants 1991*, or UPOV91. This obscure mechanism hands control of seeds to corporations that may market GM varieties and means that farmers can be arrested and even imprisoned for sharing and saving seeds.

With its *Farmers, Food and Freedom* report, Transform Trade raised awareness of the threat posed by UPOV91. Over 25,000 signed its #StopUPOV petition, which it delivered to the Minister for Trade Policy, Douglas Alexander, along with the demand to remove UPOV91 from all trade deals. When the text of the UK-India trade deal was published, UPOV was not included.

Meanwhile Transform Trade has been working with Pahariya farmers in Jharkhand, India to support their community seed banks, which "create jobs and promote local varieties of crops", it said. "Over the last year, Pahadiya farmers have introduced a new millet seed to their seed banks and formed a Farmer Producer Company to advocate for better prices for their produce."

But the fight against UPOV in UK trade deals is far from over: it is still part of 19 deals affecting 68 countries, according to Transform Trade.

The seed banks in the Pahariya community are run by women.

Photo Transform Trade

On the road with Leonie

Our Executive Director reports from the north, south and west

Leonie at the Gaia Foundation's Seed Gathering

Talking to the team at Unicorn

Unicorn Grocery in South Manchester, one of our members, has been running for nearly three decades. It continues to stand out as one of the most progressive—and successful — wholefood shops in the UK. No surprise then that they are ahead of the game on wanting to understand how the change in regulations for new GMOs will affect their supply chains and customers, and what they can do about it.

At their co-op training session in October, I presented the team with all they needed to know about new GMOs (and possibly a bit more). We discussed the question that I often get asked: Are there intrinsic problems with GMOs or are the only issues those that relate to the political and economic context in which they arise?

From GM Freeze's perspective, the question is irrelevant: We are working in the current context, and GMOs come with patents that lead to increasing concentration of power in the food system. Furthermore, the types of new GMOs being developed seem to be more about creating profits than benefits to consumers or the environment. I could give an opinion beyond this but it would be just that—a personal opinion. And for food retailers, the key issue is freedom of choice for their customers, so that all opinions and preferences can be served.

This is something that I hope to work on with Unicorn and other progressive retailers. *If you're interested, or work for a business that would benefit from getting clued up about the forthcoming deregulation of new GMOs, please get in touch—I'd be very happy to speak to you.*

Behind the scenes at Unicorn

Mutant Ecologies at Housmans

Much of my time is focused on fighting deregulation and advocating for sensible policies, and it's not often I get to think about some of the more abstract and philosophical issues in relation to genetic modification. How has critical thinking around capitalist capture of the genetic commons moved on since Vandana Shiva's seminal 1997 book, *Biopiracy*? Though it's a question that lurks in the back of my mind, I've not had the time to investigate.

So in October, I was delighted to be invited to speak at the launch of *Mutant Ecologies: how capitalism is reconfiguring the very texture of life*, alongside authors Erica Borg and Amedeo Policante, and Randa Toko from the Gaia Foundation's Seed Sovereignty Programme.

Crammed between shelves lined with the words of countless visionary thinkers, in the King's Cross Housmans bookshop, Erica presented us with glimpses of dystopian futures whilst Amedeo described the cellular biological processes that are increasingly being used, manipulated and expropriated for the purposes of capital accumulation.

I fear that I may have bought the room down to earth with a bump with my rapid explanation of the forthcoming deregulation of new GMOs. At least Randa was there to pick us up with a rallying cry for Food and Seed Sovereignty.

The Seed Gathering

The Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth, Wales, is no longer open as a visitor's centre but remains a key centre of learning for a range of skills needed for sustainable living. In October, it opened its doors to the Gaia Foundation's Seed Gathering—a two-day event that brought together people passionate about seeds.

It was truly inspiring to meet so many people dedicated to cultivating abundance and resilience in our food system through the development and distribution of diverse seeds. They don't only contribute to feeding people now, but also to the Earth's ability in the future to sustain life.

But much as it was good to celebrate this work, I was there as an unwanted guest—to remind people of the threat posed by the deregulation of newer forms of GMOs.

And not only to remind, but to connect and strategise and think about how we can protect the integrity of our seeds and freedom of choice at the opposite end of the supply chain to Unicorn. In the coming months and years, we aim to build links along the chain too.

Watch this space.

Hosted by Housmans

GMO advisory group ties itself in knots

The body with key decision-making powers around newer forms of Genetically Modified Organisms, so-called Precision Bred GMOs, has become tangled in its own contradictions.

In July, GM Freeze's Leonie Nimmo attended a meeting of ACRE, the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment. Now that the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act has passed, ACRE is responsible for deciding which new GMOs will be deregulated—making them exempt from labelling, traceability requirements and health and environmental risk assessments.

A number of disagreements and unresolved issues were apparent during the meeting. At least one member was clearly uncomfortable with the general direction of travel and the fact that the decisions being taken were not in keeping with the spirit, if not the letter, of the GenTech Act.

Foundational aspects of scientific analysis and enquiry were not available to the committee:

- The legal definition of "Precision Bred Organisms"—that they could have resulted from traditional breeding—creates a hypothesis that can't be tested because it's impossible to disprove. It is therefore scientifically meaningless.
- They couldn't talk about the risks in relation to individual applications because they have already decided that PB-GMOs are no riskier than conventionally bred organisms.
- They couldn't talk about the probability of organisms resulting from traditional breeding because "likelihood is not in the Act".

This means that it will be very difficult for ACRE to exclude newer forms of GMOs from "Precision Bred" designation, meaning that biotech companies will be at a massive advantage in any future legal challenges. Taxpayers will pay when the biotech industry wins, and meanwhile, public health and the environment are at risk.

Read the full article on the GM Freeze website: *Group that advises on new GMOs tied in multiple knots*.

See how the Byline Times covered the story: *Warning Over UK's New Genetically-Altered Food Rules as Deadline on New Law Looms*

Readers' corner

What Is Life? By John Clare (excerpt)

AND what is Life?—An hour-glass on the run,
A mist retreating from the morning sun,
A busy, bustling, still repeated dream.—
Its length?—A minute's pause, a moment's thought.
And happiness?—A bubble on the stream,
That in the act of seizing shrinks to nought.

Photo: ©John Clare Cottage

The 19th-century 'Peasant Poet' John Clare was ridiculed in his lifetime but has since been recognised as a great writer.

We welcome your creative responses to the issues raised in these pages. Thanks to Chris Cullen for this suggestion.

Instagram campaign for seed labelling with the Landworkers' Alliance

DEFRA defers seed labelling decision

In February, DEFRA embarked on a two-month consultation on whether the seeds of new GMOs should be labelled as such. The consultation was unashamedly designed for seed-producing businesses, with every question bar one asking about business impacts.

Along with allies at Gaia's Seed Sovereignty Programme and the Landworkers' Alliance, we encouraged people to respond and provided some guidance about how to navigate the tricky questions, pointing out that seeds—and food—are everybody's business. We also complained on behalf of those who felt disenfranchised by the consultation. One person described it to us as "fake", and another pointed out that "the questions are very carefully angled to avoid my concerns".

In October, three months later than planned, DEFRA published the outcome of the consultation. More than 425 people responded and three quarters supported mandatory labelling. Despite this, DEFRA decided… not to decide. "We will use the feedback received to inform future decisions on the inclusion of precision bred status in mandatory labelling," they said.

DEFRA told us: "It will be a few years before domestically produced plants will be available to farmers through to consumers. This is due to the time needed for research and to bring new varieties to market." Imported new GMOs, however, are almost certain to be sold before that.

Beyond GM is a running an online action that enables people to write to their MP demanding seed labelling: https://beyondgm.eaction.online/pbvl-consultation

Israel and Palestine: food security, destruction and solidarity

Photo Avishay Mohar/Activestills

Bulldozers operated by Israeli settlers and soldiers uproot olive trees, Al-Mughayyir, 23rd August 2025.

Food without farming

In October 2024 and January 2025, Israel hosted "food security" events, at a college two miles away from Gaza. The Food Sec&Tech Israel conferences had outwardly civilian branding but in October 2023, the event was hosted by a military trade fair organisation, that time in Tel Aviv.

The Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Chief Scientific Advisor, Robin May, attended the Tel Aviv event, funded by the FSA and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

With these events, Israel appears to have been positioning itself at the frontier of fake foods. A significant number of exhibitors at the October 2023 event were involved in the production of alternative proteins and cultivated meat—meat grown in tanks from animal cells. Such products may or may not involve genetic modification. In January 2024, Israel became the first country to approve non-GM cultivated beef.

At the October 2024 event, one discussion was on *Food Security = National Security*, a phrase often repeated by the British government.

eggmented reality

An exhibitor at the 2023 Food Sec&Tech Israel event.

Eight months prior to this, in February 2024, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) warned of imminent famine in Gaza.

The January 2025 conference was promoted as *The Global Food Security & Nutritional Resilience Conference.* The event's sole Platinum sponsor was the Ehrlich Group, "one of the most prominent Intellectual Property Groups both in Israel and internationally," according to its website. Researchers from the Volcani Institute presented work on genetically modified cultivated meat.

Food Sovereignty has also featured in the events. The 2024 agenda puts this in the context of "nutritional justice, class and inequality, vulnerable populations".

Seed bank destroyed

In July 2025, the Israeli military destroyed a seed multiplication unit of the Palestinian Local Seed Bank. According to details shared by the seed bank:

> "Using bulldozers and heavy machinery, the Israeli army destroyed the storage warehouses and infrastructure of the unit, where essential equipment, seed materials, and tools for indigenous seed reproduction were kept. The destruction was carried out without warning, under military protection, and constitutes a direct blow to Palestinian efforts to preserve local biodiversity and ensure Food Sovereignty."

Destruction of the seed multiplication unit, 31st July 2025.

The Local Seed Bank protects local seeds, which they say need less water, fertilisers and pesticides, can survive drought and salty soil, and give good quality crops. They told GM Freeze: "Each year, seeds are multiplied and shared, including with female farmers, to support small farms and reduce dependence on GM seeds or hybrid seeds."

Established in 2010, the Seed Bank now preserves 79 local plant varieties,

The Palestinian Local Seed Bank collects, preserves and protects indigenous seeds, including cauliflower.

including traditional Palestinian vegetables, herbs, medicinal plants, field crops and wild native shrubs. It says: “These seeds are important for Food Sovereignty and help farmers adapt to climate change”.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Seed Bank ran a campaign called *Say No to GMOs* and promoted laws to limit them. In Palestine, some GM seeds come from Israel but it is not legal to grow them locally.

The Landworkers’ Alliance has established a Palestinian Solidarity Twinning Project, whereby groups in the UK twin with groups or communities in Palestine. The Palestinian Local Seed Bank is twinned with Exeter Seed Bank, which is raising money to help rebuild the destroyed unit—see www.tinyurl.com/5dfbheut

Photo: @vegetable_dalliance

Bring and Share Tea and Farmwalk boosts fundraising for Al-Mughayyir in Devon, 12th October 2025.

Farms under fire, trees uprooted

Fresh and Green Vegetables in Devon is twinned with the village of Al-Mughayyir in the West Bank. Though there are extreme differences in the experience of the two farming communities, there is one common factor: in neither place is farming a lucrative endeavour, and both Ruth in Devon and Ghassan in Al-Mughayyir must supplement their income.[1] Ghassan told Ruth:

> “For me, farming is the most important and meaningful [work]—it’s my true passion. We inherited it from our ancestors, and we see the land as something living, like a human being. I can’t let a day go by without working, touching the soil and plants, guiding the workers and association members, and assigning the daily tasks. I feel truly happy when I’m among the trees, the crops, and the fruits.”

Shortly after this message was written, the Israeli military and settlers uprooted approximately 10,000 olive trees belonging to the village of Al-Mughayyir. Ghassan said:

> “For the past three days, they have been uprooting trees that are hundreds of years old. My father, who is 70 years old, has been standing at the window of our house, watching the toil of our ancestors and the hard work of many generations being destroyed under the bulldozers.”

Al-Mughayyir farmers’ association, May 2025.

Making pots and talking about the Palestinian Local Seed Bank with Exeter Seed Bank.

As of mid November 2025, 4,300 hectares of Al-Mughayyir’s land had also been taken, and 20,000 more trees confiscated—that is, located in an area not possible for the villagers to access or tend to without facing extreme violence from Israeli soldiers and settlers. After a year, the land could be taken over under Israeli law on the pretext that it has no owners. As of November 2025, Al-Mughayyir is left with just the built-up area of the village—95 hectares.

According to Ghassan, Israel exploits water and land resources in an extreme and reckless way, overusing water, especially groundwater, and relying heavily on pesticides, hormones and genetic modification. “All of this harms future generations, weakens the soil, and renders the land barren,” he says.

The widespread destruction of ancient olive groves and the livelihoods they support won’t only have an impact on nutrition and food security in the immediate future, but for generations and generations to come.

Fresh and Green Vegetables are running a fundraiser to support Al-Mughayyir. See www.tinyurl.com/yjcvyjsa

Ghassan said:

> “The distances between us are vast, but what unites us is even greater: humanity, truth, justice, and the support of the oppressed wherever they may be in this world. My family, the association, our friends, and all of our people truly value this, and we will never forget those who stand with us.”

[1] Ghassan also works for the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, which published a report on World Statistics Day 20/10/2025. It states: “These numbers are records written with the tears of mothers and the patience of unknown heroes who work tirelessly, day and night, to affirm truth through data to prove that identity endures and that the land cannot be erased. For us, statistics are not merely a profession, but a pledge and a voice of truth.”

World conservation authority divided on genetic engineering

Motion to stop the use of risky genetic engineering in nature conservation defeated by just one vote.

Photo Save Our Seeds

Dr Guy Reeves, Save our Seeds, and Ali Tapsoba, Terre à Vie, in the IUCN exhibition hall.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) held their annual congress in October, bringing together governments and civil society organisations and setting strategies designed to protect nature and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.

Civil society organisations led by Pollinis, the Coordinadora de la Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (Coordinator of the Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin), Nature Canada and others proposed a moratorium on genetically engineering wild species in natural ecosystems.

"Genetic engineering in conservation would mark a profound departure from established principles," according to the Engineering Nature website. "Rather than safeguarding nature for its intrinsic value, conservation could shift toward redesigning nature to fit human preferences."

The call for a moratorium was supported by more than 90 organisations from around the world. To pass, it needed more than 50% support from both governments and non-governmental organisations, and the vote was split down the middle. Among governments, the result was 87 in favour and 88 against, with just one government swinging the balance. Among non-governmental organisations, the result was 407 in favour and 323 against.

Ahead of the vote, GM Freeze wrote to more than 40 IUCN member organisations based in the UK, setting out reasons for endorsing the motion, including the fact that such technologies could permanently alter or eradicate species, triggering cascading effects across entire ecosystems. Furthermore, there is insufficient scientific evidence of possible outcomes, and no effective regulations to manage the risks.

In a separate vote, the IUCN adopted a policy on synthetic biology, endorsing its use in conservation. Synthetic biology was defined as a combination of science, technology and engineering to "facilitate and accelerate the understanding, design, redesign, manufacture and/or modification of genetic materials, living organisms and biological systems". The policy sets out a case-by-case approach for approving or rejecting synthetic biology proposals and was celebrated by biotechnology advocates. However, a last-minute amendment called for "additional precautionary safeguards". This was supported by 54% of both government and NGO votes.

More than 100 scientists, including contributors to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, published an open letter before the IUCN Congress, warning that releasing genetically engineered organisms into ecosystems could cause irreversible ecological damage.

GM meets AI at Rothamsted

Rothamsted Research in Hertfordshire is one of the world's longest-running agricultural research institutions and has been at the forefront of research and field trials of genetically engineered crops since the 1990s. Rothamsted offers its biotech services commercially, including its position as "one of the very few sites in the UK" where field trials of gene-edited crops can take place at farm scale.

In October, tech-biotech start-up Biographica announced that it would be opening lab facilities at Rothamsted Enterprises. Biographica describes itself as a machine-learning driven platform for "precision design" of next-generation seed genetics.

Campaign groups have sounded the alarm about the combination of machine learning (Artificial Intelligence) and genetic engineering. The report *Black Box Biotech*, by the African Centre for Biodiversity, Third World Network and ETC Group, states:

> "Using AI to digitally design genetic systems moves the process of genetic engineering into an unknowable algorithmic 'black box' where individual design decisions can be neither traced nor explained... it challenges current biosafety assessment capabilities, undermines monitoring requirements, and removes the traceability required to ensure fair and equitable benefit sharing from the use of genetic resources or to support systems of liability and redress."

The report's author, Jim Thomas, has also highlighted the dangers of fusing two powerful, risky, experimental and unpredictable technologies and using them to design life forms.

For more information on AI and GM, watch the Testbiotech webinar www.tinyurl.com/ft7y66ha

Police shield GM wheat trial at Rothamsted, 2012.

Mars to develop GM cocoa

Chocolate company Mars is working to genetically engineer cocoa with the stated aim of making the crop more resilient to climate change and less prone to disease.

According to GM Watch, which announced the news in an August digest, this strategy won't work "as the approach of focusing on single or a few genes is too reductionist". What was needed, they reminded readers, was a systems approach.

GM Watch said it had been told by a prominent person in the chocolate industry that the cause of the current cocoa crop collapse was over-use of nitrogen fertilisers, which led to fast growth and more beans but caused weak infection- and pest-prone plants. Farmers then sprayed more fungicides, destroying soil health and reducing production in the longer term.

The industry insider's solution, said GM Watch, was to stop using nitrogen fertiliser. Production would decrease for a while and prices would go up, but in time both would recover.

Burkina Faso bans Gates-backed GM mosquito experiments; samples to be destroyed nationwide

Coalition for the Monitoring of Biotechnological Activities in Burkina Faso (CVAB) press conference to denounce the release of GM mosquitoes in the village of Souroukoudingan, Guiriko region, August 21st 2025.

From *West Africa Weekly*: Burkina Faso has announced a nationwide end to the activities of Target Malaria, the research consortium funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Open Philanthropy. The decision effectively halts all experimentation with GM mosquitoes in the country.

In a statement released on August 22nd, the Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation revealed that the enclosures containing genetically modified mosquitoes were sealed on August 18. The statement added that "all samples will be destroyed according to an indicated protocol". The announcement follows Target Malaria's second experimental release of 75,000 sterile male GM mosquitoes on August 11th in the village of Souroukoudingan, Karangasso Sambla department, Houet province and Guiriko region. Target Malaria had planned to follow up their GM mosquito releases with gene drive mosquito releases—a gene drive is where a genetic modification is forced to spread through an entire population to reduce its numbers.

With the government's decision, Burkina Faso has become the first country to formally shut down Target Malaria's activities nationwide, reflecting growing scepticism over the safety, ethics, and necessity of gene drive mosquito experiments.

Source: www.tinyurl.com/bdmkhp9m

The Battle for African Agriculture—new podcast

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) has launched a new podcast that reveals the enduring legacies of colonialism in Africa's food systems, challenges corporate-driven narratives, and shares agroecological solutions rooted in justice, biodiversity and Food Sovereignty.

The Battle for African Agriculture is hosted by AFSA General Coordinator Dr Million Belay. Each episode features crucial conversations with some of the world's most insightful scientists, civil society leaders and activists working at the intersection of food systems, power and ecology.

"I dream of an Africa where our food systems reflect the diversity of our cultures, our ecologies and our indigenous knowledge," said Dr Belay. "We are in the middle of a war over narratives: Who defines what good agriculture is? Who gets to decide the future of our food? I started this podcast to challenge the colonial mindset that still shapes our food systems and to elevate the voices of those building something better—an agriculture of dignity, of ecology, of African knowledge."

Photo: Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa

You can listen to the podcast on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcast and RSS. For links see: https://afsafrica.org/14083/

Battle for African Agriculture
PODCAST

“Agroecology can change the world” Solidarity and strong direction from the third Nyéléni Forum

Around 700 delegates from more than 102 countries, representing hundreds of millions of people, attended the third Nyéléni Global Forum for Food Sovereignty, held in Kandy, Sri Lanka in September.

The 10-day forum was the largest gathering of social movements and grassroots organisations in the world. It focused on the effects of the “dominant, patriarchal, imperialist, colonialist, racist, caste and supremacist capitalist system” on food systems.

At the opening event, a giant puppet was knocked down on the stage, an act symbolising defiance against the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the debt of the countries of the South to the Global North.

The Sri Lankan Minister of Plantation and Community Infrastructure, Samantha Vidyaratna, spoke at the conference inauguration.

“We will move forward united, because, with agroecology, we can change the world,” she said. “Of course, we face difficulties, but we are committed to working together for systemic change in favour of Food Sovereignty.”

A key theme at the conference was the injustice done to farmers, food producers and, ultimately, communities by the corporate control inherent in biotechnology and genetic engineering.

Musa Sowe is Second Vice President of the Network of Farmers’ and Agricultural Producers’ Organizations of West Africa and the Africa representative on the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty. Speaking from the Forum, he said: “Agroecology promotes economic viability and is a solution where farmers can define, determine and engage in production without extra cost, because they use the natural environment… We don’t want to accept corporate ‘solutions’ that only benefit a few. We are building our own solutions, from the ground up.”

The conference included cultural performance, agroecological markets, discussions and, on day five, a fascinating spotlight on popular

Photo courtesy of Nyéléni ECA

Ceremony at Nyéléni 2025

communication—from storytelling to grassroots media—as a vital tool for advancing Food Sovereignty.

After days of intense discussion, shared reflection and solidarity, delegates came together at the closing ceremony to present recommendations drawn from the Nyéléni Declaration.

These formed two documents: the *Declaration of Kandy* and the *Common Political Action Agenda*. The Agenda has six tenets: achieving Food Sovereignty and agroecology; building and defending democracy and the rights of the people; achieving peace and internationalist solidarity; building popular economies; establishing health for everyone, and achieving climate justice and energy sovereignty.

Next steps include the Global Day of Mobilisation against imperialism, genocide, war and the use of hunger as a weapon, and dialogue sessions with trade union movements.

Samah Abunemah, head of a women’s co-operative in the West Bank village of Battir, took part in the conference. She spoke to GM Freeze:

“We’re an association of 18 female farmers, producing handicrafts and food free of industrial materials,” she said. “Through the agricultural union, we became a member of the La Via Campesina Peasant Way movement, which has a membership of 200 million peasants around the world.

“There was extensive talk about Food Sovereignty, and the conference’s message was clear: not to use starvation in Gaza as a weapon of war.”

Nyéléni wrote on their Facebook page: “When peoples are besieged by land, sea, and air, and even words are silenced, it becomes essential to open a path toward the free peoples of the world. We unite in solidarity with Palestine and with all struggles for dignity and freedom. This is a cry for human dignity, a call for justice, and an invitation to converge in solidarity.”

Samah Abunemah gestures from the stage

The first Global Forum for Food Sovereignty was held in Mali in 2007. It is named after a legendary Malian peasant woman Nyéléni, who has become one of the symbols of Food Sovereignty. For this third gathering, 80 social movements from all corners of the planet came together. They included representatives of peasant organisations, small-scale fisher people, Indigenous Peoples, nomadic and pastoral communities, landless workers, migrants, feminist and anti-racist movements, trade unions, climate justice organisations, youth collectives, public health advocates, and social and solidarity economy actors. They were supported by civil society organisations and committed academics based on the foundation that “critical science and people’s knowledge go hand in hand”.

Photo courtesy of Samah Abunemah

A global gathering.

No place for GM in the biodynamic world

The 3rd International Biodynamic Research Conference was a whirlwind of people, ideas, connections and concepts. Held in September at the grand Royal Agricultural University (RAU), the conference bought together people from across the world to share, learn and strengthen a movement.

Leonie with Dr Heberto Rodas Gaitán and Eduardo Rincón, Co-leader of the Goetheanum Section for Agriculture.

GM Freeze's Leonie Nimmo attended the conference with the mission of informing people about the deregulation of new GMOs that's happening, or on the horizon, across the world—something that runs counter to the natural, holistic approach of biodynamics.

According to the conference programme, biodynamic agriculture is "rooted in an understanding of the farm as a living organism, in co-creation with nature, and in a recognition that human beings are part of the wider communion of life".

The animals can rescue us, according to Aonghus Gordon, and oppositional, defiant goats have particular skills.

Photo: Biodynamic Association UK

Rising up with the BD crew at the RAU

The event showcased the incredible breadth of the biodynamic world, from cloud forests in Ecuador to an ecovillage in Brazil, water from Namibia, stories from Stroud, music to feel but not clap to, transnational wildlife corridors, transitional livestock management, biodynamic agriculture, dynamic bio-singing, therapeutic farms and the love that grows in a 37-year maize trial. Here were multiple keys unlocking multiple wisdoms, and multiple ontologies gathered at this threshold time.

"We were also treated to a special outing to Ruskin Mill," said Leonie. "It provides specialist education within a craft- and land-based curriculum for young people with complex needs. It's a farm, but it's not just about production. Founder Aonghus Gordon OBE explained that it was also about healing the earth and healing people."

The Gaia Foundation's We Feed the World exhibition adorned the walls of the RAU—a daily reminder of the importance of small-scale farmers for feeding the world... and just stunning. For more pictures, see www.tinyurl.com/m5j4kdze

Major win for consumer transparency

A US appeals court has ruled that exempting highly refined or ultra-processed genetically modified foods from GM labelling is unlawful—a significant victory for the public's right to know what's on their plates.

The court overturned a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) rule that exempted some foods—such as corn and soy oils—from the requirement to disclose "bioengineered" ingredients. The USDA had itself engineered a loophole that said if the modified material wasn't "detectable", then it wasn't "contained" and so didn't need to be disclosed. The appeals court also ruled that sticking a QR code on a product to give information didn't constitute "meaningful access to all Americans".

The Center for Food Safety, which brought the case on behalf of a coalition of not-for-profits and organic retailers, described the win as "a landmark victory for the public's right to know what they eat and feed their families".

Announcing their decision, the court said: "There is an obvious and important difference between whether a substance is actually present and whether, using a particular method, one is able to detect that the substance is present."

According to food sustainability website Global Agriculture, the loophole was significant because GMO ultra-processed foods such as cooking oils constitute around 70% of all GMO food ingredients.

Global Agriculture went on to explain that more than 60 countries around the world require GMO food labelling, including Europe, Japan, China and most US trade partners. Polls have consistently shown that more than 90% of Americans want to know whether a product contains GM material.

CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY
celebrating 25 years

A disaster by design

The Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Regulations were signed into law in May 2025, completing the deregulation of newer forms of GMO plants—those categorised as "Precision Bred"—which was set in motion by the Conservative government. The legislation has shredded protections against the risks posed by GMOs for which UK citizens fought hard in previous decades.

The GM Freeze report *A disaster by design: the UK's new rules for new GMOs* outlines multiple problems with the new system and why it creates health, environmental and socio-economic risks. The UK's deregulatory regime also poses a threat internationally, as countries may be pressured to accept, and potentially adopt the same, removal of safeguards.

Summary of the problems with the UK's treatment of new GMOs

- No safety testing or assessment of health risks—the GenTech Regulations prevent this.
- No environmental risk assessments.
- No segregation, labelling or traceability, or measures to notify neighbouring farms, or contain or monitor new GMOs along supply chains, which:
  - Removes consumer freedom of choice;
  - Increases contamination risk for nearby farms and wild species;
  - Threatens non-GM production, supply chains and livelihoods;
  - Undermines devolved nation sovereignty;
  - Prevents the management of environmental risks;
  - Threatens to disrupt trade with Europe and internationally, and
  - Prevents the assessment of how changes might affect future crop generations.
- No detection measures will be developed.
- Developers will decide the risk profiles of different organisms.
- There will be inadequate assessment of unintended genetic changes.
- No plants are out of scope—the regulations extend to wild species and trees.
- Patents will extend to conventional breeding, which will stifle innovation in plant breeding, threaten biodiversity and lead to biopiracy (theft of genetic resources).
- There is no requirement for sustainability outcomes of new varieties.
- Detrimental impacts on Food Sovereignty and global food security are likely.
- Sets a precedent for inadequate management of powerful emerging technologies.
- Fails to adequately or scientifically define "Precision Breeding", putting developers at a legal advantage, which may have a chilling effect on regulators and expose taxpayers to expensive lawsuits.
- Likely to contravene international agreements and protocols (the Aarhus Convention and the Cartagena Protocol of the Convention of Biological Diversity).
- Assumes certain new GMOs are equivalent to non-GMOs, and abandons the Precautionary Principle.

For more details see *A disaster by design: the UK's new rules for new GMOs.*

GM crops lead to rise in pesticides

Genetically modified crops have increased agriculture's dependence on pesticides, according to a study published in the Journal of Agrarian Change in April 2025.

Drawing on data from four GM crops—a case study of insecticide-producing cotton in India and a global analysis of herbicide-tolerant soy, maize and canola—the researchers traced the increase in GM crop production over three decades alongside a surge in chemical use.

GM insecticide-producing cotton was introduced in India with the promise of reducing chemical pesticide use and, by the mid-2000s, GM cotton covered most cotton-growing areas. The researchers found that pests developed resistance and farmers responded by spraying more insecticides. By 2018, they were spending 37% more on insecticides than before the introduction of GM cotton.

In the US, crops genetically modified to survive being sprayed with the weedkiller glyphosate initially made weed management more efficient. The result was a dramatic escalation in glyphosate application. Between 1994 and 2018, the percentage of area treated with glyphosate rose from 15% to 87%.

But contrary to the predictions of its manufacturer Monsanto (now Bayer), weeds developed resistance. GM crops have since been created to be resistant to even more dangerous chemicals.

Likewise, in Argentina, Brazil and Canada, GM crops promised simpler weed control but delivered higher herbicide use.

The study is a timely reminder of the false promises that accompany GM crops. As she introduced the UK's new regulations for new GMOs in March 2025, Emma Hardy MP said that they would be resistant to pests and diseases and reduce the need for pesticides. The study highlights the lack of evidence to support such claims.

The authors recommend pursuing systemic change rather than "incremental technical fixes toward efficiency". They state: "In complex living systems like farms... the long game of stability through diversity makes for a better evolutionary strategy."

Film review: *Percy vs Goliath* sends clear warning on UK's GM plans

Christopher Walken as farmer Percy Schmeiser and Christina Ricci as environmental activist Rebecca Salcau in the film Percy.

In 1997, Canadian farmer Percy Schmeiser sprayed the weedkiller glyphosate (which has the friendly trade name of Roundup) around the edges of his farm. He noticed that some of the canola (oilseed rape) he was growing nearby wasn't harmed. This was the start of a story that, more than 20 years later, was brought to life on the big screen by the actor Christopher Walken in the film *Percy*—also known as *Percy vs Goliath*.

For generations, Percy's family had saved the best seed from their harvest to replant the following year—a strategy that meant Percy hadn't had a failed crop in 50 years. It made sense to him to save the seed from these resilient plants and, in 1998, that is what he sowed over 1,000 acres.

And then lawyers for the biotech giant Monsanto swooped in. Percy's neighbour was growing patented, genetically modified, glyphosate-resistant canola, and manufacturer Monsanto claimed Percy had stolen their seed.

Monsanto (now Bayer) has brought hundreds of court cases against farmers for patent infringement in the US alone. It's thought that, in addition, there may be as many as 4,500 farmers who quietly settled out of court. But Percy Schmeiser, helped by a number of campaigning organisations, decided to raise his voice. The ensuing court cases went on until 2004.

In the 2020 film *Percy*, what stands out is the film-makers' efforts to tackle complex patenting law, the details of successive court hearings, and the personal impact of Monsanto's legal crusades against small farmers.

Now, with the disastrously designed UK laws around new Genetically Modified Organisms, and the government's complete failure to address the issue of patents, the film sends out a clear warning.

Regardless of the outcome of Percy's case (and we'll avoid spoilers here—watch the film!) *Percy vs Goliath* serves to highlight the wider impact it had in terms of raising awareness. Ultimately, this helped lead to the shelving of the planned introduction of GM wheat in the USA. The main reason behind this was the realisation that this staple crop would be impossible to trade on an international market where different countries have different regulations regarding the presence of genetically modified material. And given the clear evidence that GM crops don't stay in the field where they're sown, there would be no way to guarantee GM-free supplies.

Which brings us back to the UK. The new laws around new GMOs actually prevent any segregation, labelling and traceability. With GM wheat on the British horizon, how will this impact our export markets and wheat growers? The government seems intent on sacrificing them in order to win the deregulatory race to the bottom for new GMOs.

Percy vs Goliath is available on Apple TV, Prime Video and other streaming platforms.

Europe presses slowly on with removal of GMO safeguards

At the time of writing, mid November 2025, the deregulation of new GMOs in Europe is edging towards the finishing line. It is a complex issue made all the more complex by the multi-layered processes involved in passing legislation in Europe.

The Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Parliament have all reached their respective positions on the New Genomics Techniques (NGT) file. They are all different, and now the three institutions must negotiate in order to find resolutions to the issues that remain blockers.

The Parliament has the most cautious position, having voted in February 2024 for labelling and traceability. However, it is represented in negotiations by the pro-GMO Swedish MEP Jessica Polfjärd. She would much prefer that labelling and traceability were ditched, and this is likely to undermine the formal position of Parliament. Other issues of contention are patents and sustainability requirements.

Swedish MEP Jessica Polfjärd welcomes the outcome of the European Parliament's vote on NGTs, February 2024.

Act with Ekō on GM labelling

Over 70,000 people have signed a petition calling for EU leaders not to abandon labelling, safety checks and traceability requirements for GMOs.

If it strips away these requirements, the EU will hand a huge win to GMO giants like Bayer, according to Ekō, a group working to curb the growing power of corporations.

Sign the petition: action.eko.org/a/keep-gmo-labelling-eu-2025

New faces at GM Freeze

A huge thank you to Charlotte and Lucia, and welcome Rebecca, Giulia and Hannah!

GM Freeze is delighted to welcome Rebecca Dearden, who's joined the team on a freelance basis to help with finances, general admin and editing. Rebecca is a writer, communications specialist and all-round whizz, who has worked with Natural England, the Canal and River Trust, many government departments and a wide range of businesses, as well as founding her own online magazine. We're very happy to have her on board.

Dr Charlotte Bickler previously represented the Organic Research Centre on the GM Freeze Board of Directors. She's stepped down to focus on the UK Grain Lab, though she's continuing to work with ORC on a part-time basis. Stepping in to represent ORC is Giulia Kessous—already a friend of GM Freeze thanks to her help on the Vintage Seeds of Resistance project. Giulia is on ORC's Crops and Agronomy team, and has a background in law and ecology as well as hands-on experience with heritage grains in France. She's well placed to continue Charlotte's great work.

We said a bittersweet goodbye to Lucia Monje-Jelfs earlier in the year. As the Soil Association's representative on the Board, she was inspiring and innovative but also highly dependable—a great asset. Thankfully, Hannah Blitzer, the Soil Association's Farming and Land Use Senior Policy Officer, was ready to take up the mantle. Hannah is an environmental law and policy expert with a deep commitment to sustainable agriculture—something that was immediately obvious as she joined the team.

Rebecca

Giulia

Hannah

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Are you part of an organisation that works for justice and sustainability in the food system? Might your organisation be interested in becoming a member of GM Freeze? See www.gmfreeze.org/membership for more info or get in touch to discuss. Fees are calculated according to turnover and start at £40, though we can offer a reduced price to organisations if costs are a barrier to participation.

GM Freeze works for a world in which our food is produced responsibly, fairly and sustainably. We advocate for Food Sovereignty and justice in the food and farming systems. We consider and raise the profile of concerns about the impact of genetic modification. We inform, inspire, represent and support those who share our concerns. We campaign for a moratorium on GM food and farming in the UK and we oppose the patenting of genetic resources.

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