

PRESS RELEASE
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Food and Feed Imports at Risk from GM Contamination
GM Pharma Crops Add to Threat

Today, GM Freeze published an assessment [1] of which food and feed imports into the UK are at greatest risk of GM contamination. Their report concluded that maize from the USA and South Africa and rice from the USA, and the Far East are highest risk at present but warn that even limited GM testing sites can contaminate whole supply chains for some crops.

There is a growing risk of contamination of food and feed with GM pharmaceutical genes which are being engineered into food crops such as maize.

The GM Freeze report sets out a number of recommendations tougher EC regulations to reduce the risk of contaminated food entering the EU in the first place including:

- establishment of a single competent authority in each member state for GM monitoring incoming food, feed and biofuel cargoes and enforcement of GMO traceability and labelling.
- a legal obligation on biotech companies to provide analytical methods and reference materials for all the GM traits they have released anywhere commercially or experimentally as a pre-condition for receiving marketing or experimental consent for a GMO in the EU.
- establishment of an EU unit to monitor development in new GM traits and new GM crops around the world to ensure the up-to-date "at risk" list of imports plus their reference materials are available to all competent authorities and EU approved laboratories at all times.
- production of a publicly accessible and searchable website to allow food and feed companies access to this information.
- holding cargoes comprising of crops which have been genetically modified in the country of origin at the port of entry until proven to be an approved GMO or non-GM in content.
- the development of legally binding sampling protocols to ensure that of GM contents in cargoes can be assessed with the highest possible certainty.
- a return to sender approach to cargoes containing unauthorised GM traits.
- strict liability on biotechnology companies whose GM traits cause contamination for harm to health and the environment or cause economic damage.

Next year the Conference of Parties of the Biosafety Protocol meets in Bonn and GM Freeze want the EC to make sure the GM contamination issue is dealt with at this meeting by negotiating for

- an international register of GM trait for all crops which are being field tested or commercially grown anywhere on the planet.
- a ban on the genetic modification for pharmaceutical production in food crops.
- a legally binding international regime that ensures strict liability for damage caused by GMOs.

The Freeze also wants the EU to provide financial and technical support to enable poorer countries to monitor their imports for GM contamination and support them to enforce border controls.

At home the report calls upon the Food Standards Agency to follow a similar programme and take GM contamination as a serious issue.

The Freeze's analysis [2] is based on over 170 plant species which have so far been genetically modified somewhere on the Earth, the extent to which they are grown commercially or on test sites and the volumes of imports into the UK for each crop. In the last three years, Europe has experienced a number of costly and illegal GM contamination incidents including:

GM papaya from Hawaii 2005
Bt10 maize from the USA (Syngenta) 2005
LL6021 rice from the USA (Bayer) 2006
Bt Rice from China (illegal commercial cultivation thought to be responsible) 2006

Most recently Mon 863 Maize (Monsanto) and Heculex maize (Pioneer Hybrid/Dow) were found to be contaminating cargo in Ireland [3] and the UK found illegal Bt63 rice in animal feed [4].

Commenting Pete Riley campaign Director of GM Freeze said,

"The analysis we have carried out should really have been done by the EU or the EU member states if they had their act together. Our proposals would greatly reduce the chances of illegal GM imports entering the food chain and make sure approved GM cargoes are correctly labelled. The politicians and regulators of the EU need to make sure they are not being made to look stupid by a biotech industry which does not appear to care a fig about consumer choice or preventing contamination.

In the UK, politicians need to make sure that the FSA is taking GM contamination seriously. There is no sign that they are at present. There is a real risk that the next GM contamination incident could involve GM pharmaceuticals and present a real public health crisis. They have been warned!"

ENDs

Calls to Pete Riley 07903 341065 Eve Mitchell 0207 837 0642

Notes

1. GM Freeze's Report *GM Contamination imports of food and feed at risk. Measures needed to reduce the threat* is available from www.gmfreeze.org/publications/,,,
2. Details of GM Freeze's analysis can be review at www.gmfreeze.org/publications//contaminationanalysis/pdf
3. See <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/press/GMFI35.pdf>
4. See <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2007/apr/gmamfeed>