

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Ireland resists US-led GM invasion

Dublin, Ireland, 9 October 2003 (Global Vision Consulting Ltd.)

GM-free Ireland (www.gmfreeireland.org) is a multi-stakeholder network for social, political and legal action to keep the whole of this island GM-free. Time is of the essence, because the EU has caved in to WTO pressure by opening the door for transnational biotech / agribusiness corporations to invade us with GM food, GM animal feed, and patented GM seeds, crops and livestock. This imposes unacceptable environmental, social and economic threats to Ireland's current and future generations:

- genetically modified living organisms (MLOs) endanger global ecological stability because there is no way to stop modified genes from spreading after their release;
- the long-term effects of GM food on human and animal health are unknown;
- patented GM seeds give transnational corporations more control of our food supply;
- the UK's GM Nation report (11 July 2003) concluded that current GM crops offer no benefits to consumers, and only marginal benefits to farmers;
- GM contamination threatens all farmers and can ruin organic farmers;
- contaminated farmers have been sued by biotech companies and GM farmers have had their crops destroyed and been sued for contaminating their neighbours;
- insurance and re-insurance companies are refusing cover against GM disasters;
- the majority of EU consumers don't want GM food (90% against in the UK).

GM-free Ireland calls on all politicians, political parties, government agencies, civil servants, farming organisations, certification bodies, producer groups, co-ops, food processors, distributors, traders, wholesalers, supermarkets, retailers, hotels, restaurants, environmental NGOs, consumers associations, religious groups, educators, students, children and the media to get involved. As citizens of a democracy, we are all responsible. Please visit our web site at www.gmfreeireland.org to join us (free of charge) and sign our petition holding our Taoiseach, Senators, Ministers, TDs and MEPs accountable to prevent the GM invasion before it happens.

Keeping Ireland GM-free is a pre-requisite for our transition to sustainability. Ireland's green image, natural capital, farming tradition, tourism, and food security must be preserved for future generations.

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Michael O'Callaghan, chairman of **Global Vision Consulting Ltd** which is co-ordinating the GM-free Ireland campaign, said:

"So-called genetic engineering may seem like rocket science, but every school child should know that releasing GM organisms into the environment is irresponsible because it is irreversible. There is no way to stop GM crops from spreading their genes and contaminating the rest of the ecosystem once they are released. Big biotech propaganda would have us believe GM plants will end world hunger, but the reality is it will increase corporate control of the world food supply and damage farmers, consumers and the environment.

The benefits of GM are doubtful, if any. But the advantages of keeping Ireland GM-free are certain: it will protect our natural capital, advance our transition to sustainability, strengthen our world famous nuclear-free green image, and boost the long-term value of the nation's farming and eco-tourism sectors.

We would have to be complete idiots to allow the GM invasion. Citizens must act now to ensure the government does not compromise our security on this issue, before it is too late."

biotech giants file 16 applications for Irish GM licenses

Monsanto and other transnational biotech / agribusiness corporations have filed at least 16 applications to invade Ireland with their dangerous GM products. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland has 10 applications pending for GM food, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is considering 6 applications for crops and animal feed. These applications must be refused!

agriculture minister Joe Walsh: no tinkering with nature

Agriculture Minister Joe Walsh said allowing GM crops in might damage Ireland's green farming image and he would favour a very cautious approach based on full scientific evidence. "I believe the least interference you can have with nature the better, and that remains my position," said the Minister. Mr Walsh added that Ireland's most valuable farming asset is our Food Island system of natural production which should be maintained, but the approval of GM crops is up to the EPA. Green Party leader Trevor Sargent criticised the Minister for not defending Ireland more vigorously from the onslaught of GM crops, which he said would soon be a fait accompli, taking power away from farmers into the hands of big business.

The Department of Agriculture's role is to register permissible seeds and introduce rules to stop cross-contamination from so-called "co-existence" of natural and GM crops in nearby fields. Bob Dylan's song "Blowing in the Wind" comes to mind here.

legal action on the horizon

The GM-free Ireland campaign is currently consulting leading international lawyers with a view to possible legal actions. There appear to be major contradictions in international law. For example, the European Commission claims that no EU country is allowed declare itself a GM-free zone without "scientific backing", but the Biosafety Protocol (see below) affirms Ireland's right to refuse GM based on the Precautionary Principle enshrined in EU law.

The WTO tries to frame the GM controversy as a trade issue under its jurisdiction, but the Agenda 21 agreement signed by 110 Heads of State at the Rio Earth Summit suggests the WTO's position is illegal because GM is more of a biosafety issue. Court cases may be launched in Ireland, Brussels and the WTO by stakeholders concerned inter alia about the Precautionary Principle, the Principle of Subsidiarity, biodiversity, wildlife, human health, food monopoly, sustainability, fundamental property rights, commercial stability, consumer choice, the lack of insurance and liability enforcement for financial damages, and the fact that the WTO's attempt to bully the EU countries to accept environmentally unsound GMOs against the will of their citizens violates Agenda 21 and the human rights, food security and biosafety of future generations. Another world is possible!

favourable winds for Ireland to be an EU biosafety reserve

In the event that some EU countries fail to prevent their own GM invasions, it behooves the EU to insure itself against GM disasters by designating this island a GM-free biosafety reserve, for the security of other member states. Ireland is the best candidate because we are: (i) geographically isolated and surrounded by water, (ii) upstream from most transboundary wind-borne GM contamination as 80% of our wind blows from the Atlantic, and (iii) we have the lowest previous GM exposure in the EU.

Biosafety Protocol affirms right to refuse GMOs

The **Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety**, which came into force on 11 September 2003, is a global legal agreement that reaffirms the sovereign right of countries to reject GMOs on the basis of the **precautionary principle** (which is enshrined in EU law). Ireland and other countries that are party to this Protocol have the legal right to prohibit or restrict GMOs when there is scientific uncertainty about their short to long-term safety. The Protocol explicitly upholds the right of Parties to ban imports of GMOs and to impose higher safety standards. If Irish citizens demand it, our Government can immediately exercise our right under the Protocol to declare the Republic a GM-free zone, and engage the North of Ireland to extend this status to the whole island. Details of how to do this may be found in the Explanatory Guide to the Protocol published by IUCN - the World Conservation Union (www.iucn.org).

why GM crops should never be allowed

Genetically modified living organisms (MLOs) include patented seeds, plants and animals that have had foreign genes inserted into them by giant multinational biotech companies with little concern for the damage they can do. **The Ecologist** magazine has spelled out five compelling reasons why the commercialisation of GM crops should never be allowed. Please visit their web site at www.theecologist.com for details

beware the WTO and the GM coalition against nature

Threatened by world-wide consumer rejection of GM products, transnational bio-tech and agri-food corporations including Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer Cropscience, Dow, Dupont, Novartis, Cargill, Philip Morris and Netslé have hired the governments of the USA, Canada, and Argentina (the "coalition against nature") to pressure the EU and the rest of the world to accept GM food. Because the majority of EU citizens refuse GM products, in July 2003 the European Commission enacted strict labeling laws which require that any

food or beverage containing more than 0.9% GM ingredients be labelled as such. Claiming this constitutes an impediment to trade, the coalition is now filing a WTO suit against the EU which could result in massive trade sanctions.

the world's reaction: GM not wanted here!

A growing number of nations and regions - especially those with a reputation for quality food exports - are in the process of outlawing GM food, seeds, crops, animal feed and livestock. In Europe these include Austria, Wales, the Italian provinces of Tuscany and Piemonte, the Swiss Canton of Ticino, and more. In Africa, Tanzania and other countries are refusing the grow GM crops for the European market because we don't want GM food.

the GM-free Ireland web site • www.gmfreeireland.org

The **GM-free Ireland web site** is provided by Global Vision Consulting Ltd pro bono and in a spirit of collaboration, as a resource for concerned consumers, farmers, environmental NGOs and legislators. It features more information and a list of recommended books, publications, and web links on the related issues of GM food, biodiversity, biopiracy, biosafety, economic globalisation, localisation, corporate control of the global food supply, sustainable agriculture, organic farming, and food security. We can use volunteer help and welcome the creative input and collaboration of all stakeholders to improve the site and keep Ireland GM-free.

the GM-free Ireland network

The **GM-free Ireland network** is co-ordinated by Global Vision Consulting Ltd. (www.global-vision-consulting.com) and Global Vision Corporation (www.global-vision.org), a Non Governmental Organisation accredited to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

Founding members include Irish Farmers Markets, Irish Organic Partnership Ltd, and Irish Organic Trading Ltd.

Please visit our web site at www.gmfreeireland.org to sign our GM-free Ireland petition and join our campaign. As Gandhi said, you have to *be the change* you want to see in the world!

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