

PRESS RELEASE

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IRELAND'S GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD SCANDAL

Minister's assurances blatantly untrue Another blow to farm and food sector

DUBLIN, 23 May 2007 – The current Fianna Fáil / PD Government's litany of lies and broken promises on genetically modified (GM) food and farming have exposed Irish farmers, food producers, food exporters, retailers, restaurants, and consumers to years of contamination by illegal and/or toxic GM ingredients.

Following a six-week investigation by Greenpeace International and the GM-free Ireland Network, the latest scandal was revealed late last Friday when the Department of Agriculture finally admitted that it failed to test a 12,313 tonne shipment of contaminated animal feed from the USA before it was unloaded from the ship *MV Pakrac* in Dublin on 2 April [1] and placed on the market.

As a result of this fiasco, up to 5,313 tonnes of feed contaminated by illegal and toxic GM maize varieties have entered the food chain, causing potential liver and kidney damage to consumers [2].

Contamination still underway

- Farmers have no way to find out if their livestock's feed was or is contaminated.
- Restaurants, food retailers and food exporters don't know if their beef, lamb, pork, poultry, eggs, milk, butter and cheese currently is contaminated by the illegal and toxic GM ingredients.
- Consumers can not choose to avoid the contaminated meat and dairy produce, because our government supports a legal EU loophole which allows these products to be sold without a GM label.
- This lack of labelling makes it impossible for consumers and doctors to trace any resulting medical problems to the contaminated feed.
- Leading retailers across Europe, which prohibit GM ingredients in the animal feed chain, will be increasingly wary of Bord Bia's *Ireland – the food island* branding campaign which allows meat and dairy fed on legal GM ingredients to be sold under its Quality Assurance Scheme.

Toxic GM maize

In late March, Greenpeace International contacted GM-free Ireland with information that the ship *MV Pakrac*, sailing from New Orleans, was due to arrive in Dublin with a cargo of animal feed that might contain Monsanto's patented GM maize variety MON963 [3]. Although legal for feed, food and cultivation in the EU, a team of scientists at the Committee for Independent Information and Research on Genetic Engineering (CRIIGEN) [4] in France, recently re-evaluated data from a secret feeding trial which Monsanto used to convince the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) that the GM maize posed no risk to animal and human health.

The new report, published in the peer-reviewed *Archives of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology*, found that MON863 maize causes hepatorenal toxicity – damaging the liver and kidneys of laboratory rats [5].

Speaking at a press conference in Paris on 13 March, the report's co-author, Professor Gilles-Eric Seralini said: "These revelations are profoundly disturbing from a health point of view. They are certainly sufficient to require new and more carefully conducted feeding studies and an immediate ban from human or animal consumption of GM maize MON 863 and all its hybrids. This maize cannot now be considered safe to eat. We are now calling urgently for a moratorium on other approved GMOs while the efficacy of current health testing methods is reassessed."

Because EFSA regularly approves GM feed and food based on similar risk assessments provided to it by the biotech companies they are supposed to regulate, the report forced EFSA to reconsider its approval not only of the MON963 maize, amidst EU-wide calls for it to review the numerous other GM food and feed products it has similarly allowed to be placed on the market across Europe so far [6].

GM-free Ireland wanted to find out (a) if the ship's cargo included any of this toxic MON863 maize, (b) if the Department of Agriculture would analyse the imported feed (complying with the Minister of Agriculture Dáil statement that all imported feed is rigorously tested for GM content), and (c) whether any MON863 would be sold to farmers, fed to livestock, and enter our food chain.

Total breakdown of traceability system

After the MV *Pakrac* arrived in Dublin Port on 2 April, the harbourmaster, Capt. David Dignam, said he had no knowledge of the ship's cargo other than that it consisted of 16,000 tonnes of "agricultural products". The importer R&H Hall informed GM-free Ireland that the cargo unloaded here did not include any maize gluten feed or pellets, but only soya hulls and distillers' grain. While admitting that these products "most likely came from GMO crops", the importer claimed they did not — and were not required to — carry a GM label "because they would no longer contain any DNA" from the modified crops. The importer was apparently unaware that such products do contain transgenic DNA, and that EU labelling laws require all products containing 0.9% or more of ingredients consisting or derived from GM crops to carry a GM label *regardless of their DNA content* [7].

As the ship slowly unloaded its cargo in Dublin's Alexandra Basin over the next few days, Greenpeace and GM-free Ireland obtained photographic evidence of clouds of GM dust blowing off a bucket crane and drifting in the wind across unsuspecting bankers and commodities traders in the Dublin Docklands area [8]. The ship left Dublin for the Netherlands on 5 April.

When the ship arrived at Rotterdam on 12 April, a Greenpeace biosafety patrol boat approached the vessel, whose captain said the cargo was "certified GM-free by the US authorities", and gave the Greenpeace inspection team permission to come aboard and take samples of the suspect cargo. Greenpeace then sent these samples to an accredited laboratory for scientific analysis.

On 27 April, Greenpeace issued a press release [9] announcing the lab results confirmed that the supposedly "GM-free" cargo tested positive for up to 33% contamination with the toxic MON863 which had been the original subject of the investigation. But the lab test also proved the cargo contained 2.4% contamination by an illegal variety of GM maize — Herculex Rw— patented by Pioneer / Dow, which is not authorised in the EU [10]. Subsequent test results showed the cargo was also contaminated by five other legal GM maize varieties, all above the mandatory labelling threshold of 0.9%.

On 30 April, GM-free Ireland issued a press release [11] calling for an immediate recall of the feed contaminated by the illegal GM maize, and for an embargo on US maize imports until a rigorous testing regime is put in place. At a European Commission press conference on the same day, an EC spokesperson said the Commission is concerned that an illegal maize had entered the EU, and that it requested the Dutch government to notify all EU member states to recall the product via the European-wide Rapid Alert System, as required by EU law [12].

On 7 May, the Dutch Food Safety Authority (VWA) announced that its own tests of the cargo unloaded in Rotterdam confirmed the finding of the Greenpeace tests [13], but that full results would take six weeks. The following day, the VWA announced it would impound that portion of the cargo which had not yet been sold, but would not recall the contaminated product that had already been placed on the market. It also announced that it would increase testing for GM content in imports from the USA from one in ten shipments to one in four — thus allowing 80% of the animal feed imports entering the EU through the Netherlands to remain untested for contamination by illegal and/or toxic GM ingredients.

Government cover-up

On 3 May, our Department of Agriculture categorically denied that any maize gluten feed or pellets were unloaded here [14], claiming that this was backed up by a statement from the Dutch Authorities.

But late last Friday (18 May), in response to questions from GM-free Ireland, the Department reversed all of its prior denials. It not only admitted that 6,260 tonnes of distillers dried grains (meal) and 6,053 tonnes of corn gluten feed pellets were unloaded here; it claimed these products were labelled as containing GM ingredients; and finally admitted that they are contaminated by the illegal GM Herculex Rw and the toxic MON863 varieties [15].

In a cynical twist to the story, the Department is now using the admission that "the products were

declared as GM" and were "accompanied by certificates indicating the absence of Herculex and Bt10" [16] as an excuse for not testing the suspect cargo upon arrival.

The Department also admitted that it had received a 5-day prior notification from the importer that the cargo contained bulk feed ingredients, as required by EU law [17]. This should have triggered an automatic testing of the products before they were placed on the market.

Failure to act in time

It is now clear that the government

- failed to act on the advance warning it must have received from the importer on or before the 28th of March, that a high-risk shipment of US animal feed was on its way to Dublin;
- failed to test the shipment before or during the time it was being unloaded in Dublin from 2 to 5 April ;
- failed to issue a Rapid Alert warning and recall the products when the positive results of the lab tests commissioned by Greenpeace were made public on 30 April;
- failed to act when the State laboratory confirmed the by now two-week old results of the Greenpeace tests on 15 May;
- waited three more days until 4pm on Friday 18 May before admitting the cover-up, and placing a restriction order on the 7,000 tonnes that they were able to find in portal stores;
- has illegally allowed a banned substance to enter the Irish food chain and be consumed by livestock, with the resulting meat and dairy produce sold to consumers.

"Waiting 60 days before taking action shows how little the Government cares about our food safety", said Michael O'Callaghan of the GM-free Ireland Network. "This is the third or fourth time in two years that the Government's failure to implement its own food safety policy has resulted in the Irish food chain being contaminated by illegal GM ingredients. Without the investigative work by Greenpeace and ourselves, this contamination would have gone undiscovered". One can only assume that the vast majority of the annual six or seven hundred thousand tonnes of animal feed imports, which were not tested over the past five or six years, may also have contained illegal and/or toxic varieties of GM crop products.

Minister's assurances blatantly untrue

This latest food contamination scandal provides conclusive proof that the assurances given by the Minister of Agriculture and Food, Mary Coughlan, about the testing of GM imports are pure fiction.

The Minister issued a written Dáil statement in December 2006, claiming that "since April 2004 all feed imports have been subjected to inspection for accuracy of GM labelling and very high levels of compliance have been detected" [18]. The Department of Agriculture issued a written statement to GM-free Ireland on 3 May, claiming that authorised officers from the Department of Agriculture and Food "take samples of all potential GM feed imports, such as soya, maize and OSR which are not declared as consisting of or containing GM ingredients and have them analysed for the presence of GM material".

Nothing could be further from the truth:

- the Department admitted on Friday that it failed to test the *Pakrac's* cargo before it was placed on the market;
- Liam Hyde of the Department's Animal Feedingstuffs Section confirmed that imported animal feed is only tested for GM content on a random basis, adding that he was "unaware" of the scientific report that MON863 causes organ damage to laboratory animals; [19]
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- Mr. Hyde also admitted (or claimed?) that all of its records of GM animal feed imports for 2006 have been irretrievably lost due to a "computer database failure" [20], making traceability and liability impossible in the event of related disease in livestock and the human population. Do they not back up their data or keep hard copies?

International repercussions

It is now clear that Irish beef, lamb, pork, poultry and dairy produce —from livestock whose diet includes illegal, untested and/or toxic varieties of GM animal feed that have never been tested — has regularly been sold to consumers at home and abroad for years, and continues to be sold today.

This food scandal has international repercussions, because Ireland exports 90% of its meat and dairy produce. 93% of our exported beef goes to the EU market where leading retailers have extended their existing bans on GM-labelled food which they put in place in 2004 [21], to now exclude meat and dairy produce from livestock fed on GM ingredients [22].

The fact that such food continues to be marketed under Bord Bia's "Supply Chain Assurance" and "Quality Assurance" schemes, and under Féile Bia's "Certified from Farm to Fork" traceability scheme is rapidly destroying the market's confidence in what remains of our country's reputation as *Ireland — the food island*.

Our Department of Agriculture, Teagasc, and Bord Bia have become a marketing arm for the giant agribusiness-biotech corporations who seek to patent and control the global food supply [23]. Like ostriches with their head in the sand, these government agencies abuse our tax revenues to promote the biotech industry message that certified non-GMO animal feed is in short supply and prohibitively expensive. Teagasc recently published a document claiming that a ban on GM feed and crops "could cost Ireland nearly € 40 million per year" [24] – seemingly oblivious to the economic reality that there is no market for GM food in Europe. Leading retailers in the UK, France, Italy and Switzerland now require all meat and dairy to be sourced from certified non-GMO sources [25]. Bord Bia CEO Aidan Cotter recently claimed that effective segregation of GM and GM-free animal feed is "no longer practicable." This is patently untrue, as other European farmers who supply these markets have no problem sourcing supplies of certified non-GMO soya from Brazil and certified non-GMO maize products from the EU.

If Irish farmers and food exporters continue to believe the biotech industry propaganda put out by our elected representatives and civil servants, Irish meat will end up being sold as dog food in European supermarkets.

What the government should do

In response to the this GM contamination scandal, the post-election government should implement the following emergency response:

- issue an EU-wide Rapid Alert about the contaminated animal feed and derived meat and dairy produce;
- require animal feed compounders and distributors to recall all contaminated products including those that have already been placed on sale;
- assist farmers and food processors to trace and recall all contaminated meat and dairy produce that has already been contaminated;
- return what remains of the contaminated animal feed back to the sender in the USA;
- sue the parties in the USA who are responsible for the fraudulent certification of the illegal produce;
- compensate all parties whose have suffered economic and/or brand damage as a result of the scandal;
- stop dealing with each separately, and take meaningful measures to prevent future contamination;
- issue a moratorium on all US animal feed imports until a foolproof GM detection system is in place;
- prohibit all further importation and use of Monsanto's toxic MON863 maize;
- support the establishment of an all-island market for safe, certified non-GMO animal feed;
- terminate the Department's legally flawed policy "to ensure the co-existence" of GM crops with conventional and organic farming;
- require that the European Food Safety Authority stop approving GM food and feed based on secret data and risk assessments commissioned by the biotech industry, and instead take into account the views of independent scientists and member states;
- require the European Commission to recognise the legal democratic right of Member States, Regions and local authorities (including Irish County and Town Councils) to have the final say on whether GMO crops may be released in their areas;
- admit the failure of the previous government's pro-GMO policy;
- work with the Northern Irish Assembly to prohibit the release of live GMO seeds, crops, trees, fish and livestock on this island, and
- declare the whole of Ireland a GMO-free zone with the most credible GM-free food brand in Europe.

What stakeholders are already doing

In response to requests from food and farm industry groups, the GM-free Ireland Network has convened a stakeholders meeting on 9 June, to discuss building the market for certified non-GMO animal feed. Participants include farming organisations, animal feed importers and distributors, live cattle and meat exporters, food retailers, restaurateurs and chefs, and Brazil's largest exporter of certified non-GMO soya products. The experts say there is no problem delivering the product provided that farmers create a large enough market to bring costs down and negotiate with exporters to ensure that premia paid by consumers are passed back to the producers [26].

A follow-up expert briefing on the scientific evidence of GM food and feed health risks will be held at the European Parliament Office in Dublin on 15 June.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS:

[1] "Statement on unauthorised GM event in maize", Irish Department of Agriculture press release, 18 May 2007.

See also:

- "Unauthorised GM maize found in imported feed", Irish Independent, 22 May 2007,
- "Animal feed containing illegal GM maize impounded", Irish Times, 21 May 2007.

[2] The report made headlines in the global press – but was apparently not covered in the Irish media:

- "GMO corn caused liver, kidney problems in rats: study", Scientific American, 13 March 2007.
- "French scientists express doubt about genetically modified corn", Deutsche Welle, 13 March 2007.
- "New study reveals signs of toxicity of GE maize approved for human consumption: Greenpeace demands immediate withdrawal of high-risk GE products", Greenpeace International press release, Mar 13 2007.
- "Strong suspicions of toxicity in a GMO maize", Le Monde, 14 March 2007.
- "The MON863 case - a chronicle of systematic deception":
www.greenpeace.org/international/press/reports/mon863_chronicle_of_deception
- See also abstract of CRIIGEN report in note 5 below.

[3] MON863 maize is authorised for food-and feed use in the EU. However, it is under suspicion of posing significant health risks and is currently under review by the European Food Safety Authority, after Professor Seralini, a French scientist, published a study which demonstrates that laboratory rats, fed with a genetically engineered (GE) maize MON 863, have shown signs of toxicity in kidney and liver. Seralini, G-E, Cellier, D. & Spiroux de Vendomois, J. 2007. New analysis of a rat feeding study with a genetically modified maize reveals signs of hepatorenal toxicity. Published in: "Archives of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology".

[4] See CRIIGEN press release at http://www.criigen.org/cp_march2007.pdf and video of related press conference at <http://www.criigen.org>

[5] New Analysis of a Rat Feeding Study with a Genetically Modified Maize Reveals Signs of Hepatorenal Toxicity, Journal Archives of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology. Publisher Springer New York. ISSN 0090-4341 (Print) 1432-0703 (Online). DOI 10.1007/s00244-006-0149-5. By Gilles-Eric Seralini [1] [ii], Dominique Cellier [i], [iii], and Joel Spiroux de Vendomois [i].

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<http://www.agbios.com/docroot/decdocs/05-184-001.pdf>

Abstract:

Health risk assessment of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) cultivated for food or feed is under debate throughout the world, and very little data have been published on mid- or long-term toxicological studies with mammals. One of these studies performed under the responsibility of Monsanto Company with a transgenic corn MON863 has been subjected to questions from regulatory reviewers in Europe, where it was finally approved in 2005. This necessitated a new assessment of kidney pathological findings, and the results remained controversial. An Appeal Court action in Germany (Münster) allowed public access in June 2005 to all the crude data from this 90-day rat-feeding study. We independently re-analyzed these data. Appropriate statistics were added, such as a multivariate analysis of the growth curves, and for biochemical parameters comparisons between GMO-treated rats and the controls fed with an equivalent normal diet, and separately with six reference diets with different compositions. We observed that after the consumption of MON863, rats showed slight but dose-related significant variations in growth for both sexes, resulting in 3.3% decrease in weight for males and 3.7% increase for females. Chemistry measurements reveal signs of hepatorenal toxicity, marked also by differential sensitivities in males and females. Triglycerides increased by 2440% in females (either at week 14, dose 11% or at week 5, dose 33%, respectively); urine phosphorus and sodium excretions diminished in males by 3135% (week 14, dose 33%) for the most important results significantly linked to the treatment in comparison to seven diets tested. Longer experiments are essential in order to indicate the real nature and extent of the possible pathology; with the present data it cannot be concluded that GM corn MON863 is a safe product.

[6] "EFSA to review Monsanto maize concerns", FoodNavigator.com, 15 March 2007.

See also "EFSA's GM maize assessment to take several weeks", FoodNavigator.com, 26 March 2007.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was publicly discredited in April 2006 when the EC agreed a proposal by EU Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner Markos Kyprianou and EU Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas, to overhaul EFSA's authorisation procedures for placing GM products on EU markets. Kyprianou and Dimas criticised EFSA for routinely approving GM foods based on safety claims made by the agri-biotech companies they are supposed to regulate, for refusing to consider independent scientific evidence on GMO risks, and for ignoring the views of the majority of EU member states which are opposed to GM food and farming. The EFSA is now legally required to take into account the opinions of member states, and to conduct independent research on the short- and long-term health and environmental risks of GM food and farming. Prior EFSA opinions on the safety of GM foods have no credibility. But the latest reports in May 2007 suggest that the reform procedure has been a failure.

[7] EU food labelling regulation (EC) No. 1829/2003:

- Art 15 (1.) c states that feed (and its components) produced from GMOs fall into the scope of the regulation. It is irrelevant whether the component or the feed actually contains any modified DNA. This so-called application principle replaces the formerly applicable detection principle. It goes for feed just as much as for food (Art. 12).
- Art 24 regulates the labelling requirements and states clearly that material according to Art 15 falls under its scope. Art. 24 (2.) stipulates the conditions when material must be labelled as GMO: Whenever there is any presence above 0.9% with the exception of material that is below 0.9% and "provided that this presence is adventitious or technically unavoidable."

See also "Labelling of GMO in Feedstuffs: Remarks Regarding a Recent Report by the EU Commission". By Jochen Koester, Director, IMCOPA (Europe) SA; published in Feed Magazine, March 2007; available for download at http://www.gmfrireland.org/feed/briefing/FeedMag_GMO_Labelling.pdf

[8] See photographs and press release at <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/pakrac>

[9] <http://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/press-centre/press-releases2/new-illegal-gmo-found-in-us-sh>

[10] Herculex GE insect resistant maize (59122) is genetically engineered to resist the corn rootworm. The fact that they are in animal feed being imported into the EU raises food and feed safety issues. Although European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recently gave an opinion on this maize saying it was "unlikely to have any adverse effect on human and animal health", this is not a good indicator for the safety of Herculex maize. The confidence in EFSA's GMO opinions has been undermined by a series of incidents in which EFSA has ignored scientific evidence (including evidence by EU member states) pointing at negative effects (such as signs of toxicity) of GMOs on test animals.

Studies on test animals with Herculex maize show several adverse effects such as:

- statistically significant decreases in absolute reticulocyte count
- increases in mean corpuscular haemoglobin and mean corpuscular haemoglobin concentration [*]

The findings in the blood parameters in the 90 day feeding trial are of particular importance because these effects are noticed after only a short time. They could give an indication of toxicity in the longer term. This is similar to concerns expressed with MON863. However, EFSA simply dismiss all these differences (as they did with MON863) saying results are within historical or literature ranges or simply that they are "unlikely to be of any biological significance".

(*) EFSA 2007. Opinion of the Scientific Panel on Genetically Modified Organisms on an application (Reference EFSA-GMO-NL-2005-12) for the placing on the market of insect-resistant genetically modified maize 59122, for food and feed uses, import and processing under Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003, from Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc. and Mycogen Seeds, c/o Dow Agrosiences LLC. (Question No EFSA-Q-2005-045) Opinion adopted on 23 March 2007. *The EFSA Journal* (2007) 470, 1-25

[11] <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/press/GMFI35.pdf>

[12] "Brussels urges the Netherlands to trace down bad maize", ANP, 1 May 2007.

[13] "Netherlands refuses GM corn shipment from US", Agence France-Presse, 9 May 2007.

"Illegal genetically engineered maize let loose in Europe - Dutch authorities order partial recall", Greenpeace press release, 9 May 2007.

"EC slammed for 'complete breakdown of GM testing and labelling scheme", press notice from GM Free Cymru, 1 May 2007.

[14] Note sent to GM-free Ireland by Martin Heffernan of the Irish Department of Agriculture press office (corporate affairs division).

[15] "Statement on unauthorised GM event in maize", Irish Department of Agriculture press release, 18 May 2007.

[16] GM free Ireland requested copies of these lab certificates on 15 May, but had not yet received them as of 22 May. These certificates will be posted on the GM-free Ireland website at <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/packrac> as soon as they become available.

Note the reference to Bt10 – this is another illegal variety, 2,546 tonnes of which were landed at Greenore Port in Co. Louth in May 2005. That shipment of Bt10 was mislabelled as Bt11 – a variety which was included in the Pakrac's contaminated cargo. For details see <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/scandal> .

[17] Department of Agriculture "Response to the questions raised by Mr O Callaghan", sent to GM-free Ireland on 18 May.

[18] Dáil statement by Minister for Agriculture and Food Mary Coughlan, [40579/06] in response to a question by Mr. Boyle, TD:

Mr. Boyle asked the Minister for Agriculture and Food if her attention has been drawn to the volume of genetically modified produce and seeds imported here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40579/06]

Minister for Agriculture and Food (Mary Coughlan):

"My Department has responsibility for the regulation of animal feed and seeds containing GMOs. Following the coming into force, in April 2004, of EU Regulation (EC) 1829/2003 on genetically modified food and feed and Regulation (EC) 1830/2003 on the labelling and traceability of GM products, all GM produce consisting of or containing GM material in excess of 0.9% must be appropriately labelled. This affords competent authorities the opportunity to accurately establish the level of GM imports into the community.

Since April 2004 all feed imports have been subjected to inspection for accuracy of GM labelling and very high levels of compliance have been detected. The level of GM feed imported into Ireland in 2005 was as follows:

GM maize: 464,000t (95% of total imports)
GM Soya: 204,000t (95% of total imports)
GM Rapeseed: 4,300t (3% of total imports)
GM cottonseed: none out of a total of 11,000t

In the case of GM seeds the Commission are still examining proposals relating to labelling thresholds. In the interim a voluntary system, involving the majority of Member States including Ireland, was established whereby imports of certain at risk seeds such as maize, fodder beet, oil seed rape and soya bean seed must be accompanied by a laboratory certificate showing the levels of GM in any seed to be below identified thresholds of 0.3% and 0.5% depending on the crop. All certificates received indicated full compliance with these thresholds."

See also "Sargent slams Coughlan's irresponsible approach to GMOs", Irish Green Party press release, 1 December 2006.

[19] Personal communication from Mr. Hyde by phone to Michael O'Callaghan of GM-free Ireland, around 28 March 2007

[20] *ibid.*

[21] In January 2005, Greenpeace published a detailed report "No Market for GM-labelled food in Europe", showing that the EU market for GM labelled food products is virtually closed. Europe's top 30 retailers and top 30 food & drink producers have policies and non-GM commitments which reveal a massive international food industry rejection of GM ingredients. This cuts across the industry from food and drink manufacturers to retailers, and includes everything from snacks and ready meals to pet food and beer. The combined total food and drink sales of the 49 companies with a stated non-GM policy in their main market or throughout the EU (27 retailers and 22 food and drink producers) amounts to € 646 billion, more than 60% of the total € 1,069 billion European food and drink sales. Irish food companies doing business internationally need to implement a non-GM policy without delay. The report can be downloaded here as a large 2MB pdf file:
<http://www.gmfreeireland.org/downloads/NoMarketForGMFood.pdf>

[22] In Switzerland, Migros and Coop systematically ban all GM animal feed in their supermarket brands. In the UK (Tesco, Sainsburys, Marks & Spencer and Budgen Stores), in France (Carrefour, Cora, Auchan and Monoprix), and in Italy (Coop Italia) all have their own quality labels for meat and dairy produce from livestock fed a certified GM-free diet. Several Italian and French PDOs for cheese are now looking for supplies of GM-free animal feed. In Austria and the Netherlands, the same applies to milk and beef. In the UK, standard poultry sold in supermarkets has a label certifying GM-free feed.

[23] Teagasc's Information Centre for Genetically Modified (GM) Crops in Ireland has launched a web site at <http://www.gmoinfo.ie> whose stated purpose is "to examine the possible economical and environmental impact of GM crops" and "to present this research in an impartial format to support the reader's understanding of the potential issues associated with GM crop cultivation".

For its first few years of operation, this tax-payer supported Teagasc website read like it was written by the biotech industry. It completely failed to mention any of the problems caused by the release of GM seeds and crops. These include the fact that any food carrying a GM label is refused by over 70% of EU

consumers; that the commercial cultivation of GMO seeds and crops is banned in all or part of 22 EU member states; that GM crop contamination incidents have been reported in 40 countries; the scientific evidence of deaths and disease attributable to GM food ingredients in laboratory animals, livestock and the human population; the environmental risks including loss of biodiversity and superweeds; mandatory GM labelling; consequent loss of market share; crop patent royalties, cross-contamination and patent infringement lawsuits, the expropriation of farmers crops by giant agri-biotech corporate patent owners under the WTO's Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement and related European and Irish patent laws; and the insurance industry's refusal to provide cover against GM risks.

Following heavy criticism from GM-free Ireland, Teagasc has replace the web site's content with a notice saying "the website is currently under construction."

[24] "GM-free island could cost €40m a year", Irish Examiner, 3 May 2007.

[25] See note 22 above.

[26] This private stakeholders meeting is by invitation only. To facilitate free and open discussion, the proceedings will be held under the Chatham House Rule (participants may share information received providing speaker's identities and affiliations remain confidential). If you would like to submit a request for invitation, please contact Michael O'Callaghan at GM-free Ireland on +353 (0)404 43885 or by email to mail@gmfreeireland.org

Details of the briefing on the health risks of GM feed and food at the European Parliament Office in Dublin on 15 June will be posted on the GM-free Ireland web site at <http://www.gmfreeireland.org>