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Genetically Engineered Food

The genetic engineering of plants and animals is looming as one of the greatest and most intractable environmental challenges of the 21st Century. Already, this novel technology has invaded our grocery stores and our kitchen pantries by fundamentally altering some of our most important staple food crops.



By being able to take the genetic material from one organism and insert it into the permanent genetic code of another, biotechnologists have engineered numerous novel creations, such as potatoes with bacteria genes, "super" pigs with human growth genes, fish with cattle growth genes, tomatoes with flounder genes, and thousands of other plants, animals and insects. At an alarming rate, these creations are now being patented and released into the environment.

Currently, up to 45 percent of U.S. corn is genetically engineered as is 85 percent of soybeans. It has been estimated that 70-75 percent of processed foods on supermarket shelves--from soda to soup, crackers to condiments--contain genetically engineered ingredients.

A number of studies over the past decade have revealed that genetically engineered foods can pose serious risks to humans, domesticated animals, wildlife and the environment. Human health effects can include higher risks of toxicity, allergenicity, antibiotic resistance, immune-suppression and cancer. As for environmental impacts, the use of genetic engineering in agriculture could lead to uncontrolled biological pollution, threatening numerous microbial, plant and animal species with extinction, and the potential contamination of non-genetically engineered life forms with novel and possibly hazardous genetic material.

Despite these long-term and wide-ranging risks, Congress has yet to

URGENT ACTION

- rBGH labeling Threatened in Ohio!**
- GE Sugar? Not S Sweet**
- Tell food companies you won't eat food from Clones!**
- Your Right to Know: Does you Milk have Artificial Hormones?**
- Stop the Approval of Genetically Engineered Fish**



pass a single law intended to manage them responsibly. This despite the fact that our regulatory agencies have failed to adequately address the human health or environmental impacts of genetic engineering. On the federal level, eight agencies attempt to regulate biotechnology using 12 different statutes or laws that were written long before genetically engineered food, animals and insects became a reality. The result has been a regulatory tangle, where any regulation even exists, as existing laws are grossly manipulated to manage threats they were never intended to regulate. Among many bizarre examples of these regulatory anomalies is the current attempt by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to regulate genetically engineered fish as "new animal drugs."

The haphazard and negligent agency regulation of biotechnology has had serious consequences for consumers and the environment. Unsuspecting consumers by the tens of millions are being allowed to purchase and consume unlabeled genetically engineered foods, despite a finding by FDA scientists that these foods could pose serious risks. And new genetically engineered crops are being approved by federal agencies despite admissions that they will contaminate native and conventional plants and pose other significant new environmental threats. In short, there has been a complete abdication of any responsible legislative or regulatory oversight of genetically engineered foods. Clearly, now is a critical time to challenge the government's negligence in managing the human health and environmental threats from biotechnology.

CFS seeks to prevent the approval, commercialization or release of any new genetically engineered crops until they have been thoroughly tested and found safe for human health and the environment. CFS maintains that any foods that already contain genetically engineered ingredients must be clearly labeled.

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