

USDA RECOMMENDS “COEXISTENCE” WITH MONSANTO: WE SAY HELL NO!¹

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"If you put a label on genetically engineered food you might as well put a skull and crossbones on it." - Norman Braksick, president of Asgrow Seed Co., a subsidiary of Monsanto, quoted in the Kansas City Star, March 7, 1994

"Monsanto should not have to vouchsafe the safety of biotech food. Our interest is in selling as much of it as possible. Assuring its safety is the FDA's job." - Phil Angell, Monsanto's director of corporate communications, quoted in the New York Times, October 25, 1998

After 16 years of non-stop biotech bullying and force-feeding Genetically Engineered or Modified (GE or GM) crops to farm animals and "Frankenfoods" to unwitting consumers, Monsanto has a big problem, or rather several big problems. A growing number of published scientific studies indicate that GE foods pose serious human health threats. The American Academy of Environmental Medicine (AAEM) recently stated that "Several animal studies indicate serious health risks associated with GM food," including infertility, immune problems, accelerated aging, faulty insulin regulation, and changes in major organs and the gastrointestinal system. The AAEM advises consumers to avoid GM foods. Before the FDA arbitrarily decided to allow Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) into food products in 1994, FDA scientists had repeatedly warned that GM foods can set off serious, hard-to-detect side effects, including allergies, toxins, new diseases, and nutritional problems. They urged long-term safety studies, but were ignored. <http://www.responsibletechnology.org>

Federal judges are finally starting to acknowledge what organic farmers and consumers have said all along: uncontrollable and unpredictable GMO crops such as alfalfa and sugar beets spread their mutant genes onto organic farms and into non-GMO varieties and plant relatives, and should be halted. http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_22173.cfm

An appeals court recently ruled that consumers have the right to know whether the dairy products they are purchasing are derived from cows injected with Monsanto's (now Elanco's) controversial recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH), linked to serious animal health problems and increased cancer risk for humans.

Monsanto's Roundup, the agro-toxic companion herbicide for millions of acres of GM soybeans, corn, cotton, alfalfa, canola, and sugar beets, is losing market share. Its overuse has spawned a new generation of superweeds that can only be killed with super-toxic herbicides such as 2,4, D and paraquat. Moreover, patented "Roundup Ready" crops require massive amounts of climate destabilizing nitrate fertilizer. Compounding Monsanto's damage to the environment and climate, rampant Roundup use is literally killing the soil, destroying essential soil microorganisms, degrading the living soil's ability to capture and sequester CO₂, and spreading deadly plant diseases. http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_21039.cfm

¹ Organic Consumers' Association, Straight to the Source, December 22, 2010

In just one year, Monsanto has moved from being Forbes' "Company of the Year" to the Worst Stock of the Year. The Biotech Bully of St. Louis has become one of the most hated corporations on Earth. <http://www.organicconsumers.org/monlink.cfm>

Monsanto and their agro-toxic allies are now turning to Obama's pro-biotech USDA for assistance. They want the organic community to stop suing them and boycotting their products. They want food activists and the OCA to mute our criticisms and stop tarnishing the image of their brands, their seeds, and companies. They want us to resign ourselves to the fact that one-third of U.S. croplands, and one-tenth of global cultivated acreage, are already contaminated with GMOs. That's why Monsanto recently hired the notorious mercenary firm, Blackwater, to spy on us. That's why Monsanto has teamed up with the Gates Foundation to bribe government officials and scientists and spread GMOs throughout Africa and the developing world. That's why the biotech bullies and the Farm Bureau have joined hands with the Obama Administration to preach their new doctrine of "coexistence."

"Coexistence" or Cooptation?

The Agriculture Department is dutifully drafting a comprehensive "coexistence policy" that supposedly will diffuse tensions between conventional (chemical but non-GMO), biotech, and organic farmers. Earlier this week industry and Administration officials met in Washington, D.C. to talk about coexistence. Even though the Organic Consumers Association tried to get into the meeting, we were told we weren't welcome. The powers that be claim that the OCA doesn't meet their criteria of being "stakeholders." The unifying theme in these closed-door meetings is apparently that Monsanto and the other biotech companies will set aside a "compensation" fund to reimburse organic farmers whose crops or fields get contaminated. That way we'll all be happy. Monsanto, Bayer, Syngenta, Dow, and Dupont will continue planting their hazardous crops and force-feeding animals and consumers with GMOs. Organic farmers and companies willing to cooperate will get a little compensation or "hush money." But of course our response to Monsanto and the USDA's plan, as you might have guessed, is hell no!

There can be no such thing as "coexistence" with a reckless and monopolistic industry that harms human health, destroys biodiversity, damages the environment, tortures and poisons animals, destabilizes the climate, and economically devastates the world's 1.5 billion seed-saving small farmers. Enough talk of coexistence. We need a new regime that empowers consumers, small farmers, and the organic community. We need a new set of rules, based on "truth-in-labeling" and the "precautionary principle" - consumer and farmer-friendly regulations that are basically already in place in the European Union - so that "we the people" can regain control over Monsanto, indentured politicians, and the presently out-of-control technology of genetic engineering.

Truth-in-Labeling: Monsanto and the Biotech Industry's Greatest Fear

In practical terms coexistence between GMOs and organics in the European Union, the largest agricultural market in the world, is a non-issue. Why? Because there are almost no GMO crops under cultivation, nor consumer food products on supermarket shelves, in the EU, period. And why is this? There are almost no GMOs in Europe, because under EU law, as demanded by consumers, all foods containing GMOs or GMO ingredients must be labeled. Consumers have the freedom to choose or not to consume GMOs, while farmers, food processors, and retailers have (at least legally) the right to lace foods with GMOs, as long as they are labeled. Of course consumers, for the most part, do not want to consume GM Frankenfoods. European farmers and food companies, even junk food purveyors like McDonald's and Wal-Mart, understand quite

well the axiom expressed by the Monsanto executive at the beginning of this article: "If you put a label on genetically engineered food you might as well put a skull and crossbones on it.

"The biotech industry and Food Inc. are acutely aware of the fact that North American consumers, like their European counterparts, are wary and suspicious of GMO foods. Even without a PhD, consumers understand you don't want to be part of an involuntary food safety experiment. You don't want your food safety or environmental sustainability decisions to be made by profit-at-any-cost chemical companies like Monsanto, Dow, or Dupont-the same people who brought you toxic pesticides, Agent Orange, PCBs, and now global warming. Industry leaders are acutely aware of the fact that every single industry or government poll over the last 16 years has shown that 85-95% of American consumers want mandatory labels on GMO foods. Why? So that we can avoid buying them. GMO foods have absolutely no benefits for consumers or the environment, only hazards. This is why Monsanto and their friends in the Bush, Clinton, and Obama administrations have prevented consumer GMO truth-in-labeling laws from getting a public discussion in Congress, much less allowing such legislation to be put up for a vote. Obama (and Hilary Clinton) campaign operatives in 2008 claimed that Obama supported mandatory labels for GMOs, but we haven't heard a word from the White House on this topic since Inauguration Day.

Although Congressman Dennis Kucinich (Democrat, Ohio) introduces a bill in every Congress calling for mandatory labeling and safety testing for GMOs, don't hold your breath for Congress to take a stand for truth-in-labeling and consumers' right to know what's in their food. Especially since the 2010 Supreme Court decision in the so-called "Citizens United" case gave big corporations and billionaires the right to spend unlimited amounts of money (and remain anonymous, as they do so) to buy elections, our chances of passing federal GMO labeling laws against the wishes of Monsanto and Food Inc. are all but non-existent.

Therefore we need to shift our focus and go local. We've got to concentrate our forces where our leverage and power lie, in the marketplace, at the retail level; pressuring retail food stores to voluntarily label their products; while on the legislative front we must organize a broad coalition to pass mandatory GMO (and CAFO) labeling laws, at the city, county, and state levels.

Millions Against Monsanto: Launching a Nationwide Truth-in-Labeling Campaign, Starting with Local City Council Ordinances or Ballot Initiatives

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Early in 2011 the Organic Consumers Association, joined by our consumer, farmer, environmental, and labor allies, plans to launch a nationwide campaign to stop Monsanto and the Biotech Bullies from force-feeding unlabeled GMOs to animals and humans. Utilizing scientific data, legal precedent, and consumer power the OCA and our local coalitions will educate and mobilize at the grassroots level to pressure retailers to implement "truth-in-

labeling" practices; while simultaneously organizing a critical mass to pass mandatory local and state truth-in-labeling ordinances or ballot initiatives similar to labeling laws already in effect for country of origin, irradiated food, allergens, and carcinogens.