

GMOs/Organics

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*“There’s a crack in everything,
That’s how the light gets in.”*
From “Anthem” by Leonard Cohen

In May, the food labeling committee of the international food standards authority, Codex, had its annual meeting - this time in Calgary. Its new chair is Health Canada’s Paul Mayers, well-known for his unconditional support of genetically modified foods. He tried his best – unsuccessfully - to ensure that genetically modified (GM) foods would not be labeled as such. The EU and others kicked up a big fuss and the matter is, once again, postponed to next year’s meeting.

When Codex was founded in 1963, genetic engineering was not even part of science fiction; today, it is a living science nightmare that 97% of Canadians would like to awake from. In direct contradiction to exhaustively documented public rejection of GM foods in Canada, at the Codex meeting in Calgary, our government supported those countries producing GMO foods, namely the USA, Argentina, New Zealand, and Australia. The people of these countries are also opposed to GM foods, but their governments don’t listen to them either. According to the US National Health Federation’s lawyer Scott Tipps, representing anti-GMO groups at the Calgary Codex meeting, these GM-pushing countries agreed that “the consumer is too stupid to understand [that GM foods are good for us and] wished to see GM-food labeling disappear into a black hole.”

However, international scientific consensus supports the supposedly ignorant consumer. Last year, the 63-nation committee on International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology Development (IAASTD) stated in their final unanimous report that “the agriculture of the future is one that works with nature and the people – not against them” and that “genetically engineered crops will not play a substantial role in addressing the key problems of climate change, biodiversity loss, hunger, and poverty.” Indeed, the report urged “governments to recognize consumer preference with respect to GM foods, protect farmers’ seed rights, and ensure that no cross contamination takes place.” Included in this international committee were the not-so-stupid scientists from those same countries fighting labeling in Calgary.(Vitality, July 2008)

Eleven European countries banned GM crops that year. Interestingly, Monsanto’s top executives saw the writing on the wall even earlier and started selling off their own, once highly prized shares in their company, as reported by Forbes Insider Trading on July 17, 2007. That same month, the US Patent Office reversed some of Monsanto’s key patents, on which their genetic engineering products depend, finding that Monsanto did not actually have the intellectual

property rights to them (Vitality October 2007). Perhaps encouraged by this development, 26 leading biotech scientists formally declared, also in 2008, that the patent system has effectively caused science to be monopolized by corporations and thus actively prevents scientists from working for the public interest. (Andrew Pollack, New York Times February 20, 2009)

Back in 1999, 136 scientists from all over the world had already called for a moratorium on GM crops and a total ban on patents for crops. Since patents are only useful if they hold the promise of future profits, being in GM crops may be even worse these days than being in the automotive industry; the Genetic Engineering News reported on September 1, 2008, that there just isn't any money for such "inherently risky business", and that the greatest competition to biotech now comes from the "emerging clean energy" sector. However, food technology experts like John Floros observe that funding for biotech has drastically reduced over the past 15 years: "You can see the zero" he lamented, when addressing a biotech conference in early June. He blames the "Slow Food and organic lobby [which caused] the perception that food technology is about 'messing' with food - and that threatens to undermine food safety efforts", which for him means biotechnology. With apologies to Dr. Floros, I was cheering.

Also heartening was the news that the US Department of Agriculture suggested a moratorium on cloned beef to achieve "an acceptance process ... given the emotional nature of this issue." More than 50% of Americans don't want cloned meat in any form anywhere.

INCONVENIENT TRUTHS

When profit becomes synonymous with control, reliance on secrecy and lies becomes the order of the day. Jeffrey Smith's outstanding books on biotech foods take you through a carefully documented maze of deception and criminal disregard for health and ecology that makes your head spin. The first time I read his *Seeds of Deception* I literally got a headache. What astounded me was the long list of documented cases of all those animals refusing to eat GM foods: geese, hogs, squirrels, elk, deer, raccoons, mice, rats, and cows - which crashed through fences in order to get at non-GM food in the adjoining fields. In every case, when forced to eat GM foods, they became sick, sometimes after one feeding, or died. The most recent, 2007 research shows that Monsanto's biotech corn is toxic to the liver and the kidneys.

We can avoid GM foods, but with great difficulty: according to the Centre of Food Safety, about 60% of all processed foods have GM content.

The scientists who reported their truthful research results about GM foods were silenced one way or another (see Dr. Chopra's book on our government's tactics), and their research was kept from the public by a specially appointed guardian, Michael Taylor, who also happens to be the cousin of then US Vice President Al Gore's wife. President Clinton made Taylor the Deputy Commissioner for Policy, a new office he created to control biotech information at both the FDA and the US Department of Agriculture. Once Taylor had sanitized all available science, which is now available and showed this technology to be unfit for human

and animal consumption and a potential ecological disaster, he was rewarded with the Vice-Presidency of Monsanto.

As for the US taxpayer, the losses in international trade for just 1999-2001 amounted to \$ 12 billion – and are continuing unabated. Biotechnology is history's most spectacular economic failure. In Canada, the entire canola export went down the drain with annual financial losses of hundreds of millions, for the simple reason that GM canola oil is known to be a health hazard ranging from hypertension to cancer. Its rapeseed oil content was found to be carcinogenic in China when breathed in while for stir-frying (Wall Street Journal June 7, 1995).

Today, the US has to subsidize farmers up to \$ 5 billion annually to cover GM-related crop failures and damage. This may become as expensive as their wars, because long predicted "superweeds" have emerged in the Sun Belt states, where pigweed has mutated into chemical invincibility through constant applications of Roundup (glyphosate), devastating cotton and soybeans. In 2008 about 45% of all those vast fields had to be hand weeded. (On Roundup www.naturalnews.com)

Last year, 80% of South Africa's GM corn harvest failed: 82,000 hectares grew fine-looking corn, but with no cobs (seeds) at all. In India some 1,500 farmers committed suicide when their crops failed year after year and their biotech contracts could not be fulfilled. Prince Charles, ignoring the pressure to shut up exerted by Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, called for an end to biotech farming, quoting Mahatma Gandhi's warning against "commerce without morality" and "science without humanity" – such as recently using children for GM food trials conducted by Syngenta and sponsored by Bill Gates and the Rockefeller Foundation.

The Prince also called attention to the lie that biotechnology is necessary to feed the world. In fact, according to organizations studying hunger and food shortages, the world produces annually about twice as much food as required – through non-biotech farming. Organic methods way outperform conventional, leave alone biotech, methods: Brazil and Ethiopia increased their yields by 250% when they switched to organic methods. (Independent, October 5, 2008; Daily Mail, February 17, 2009)

What will happen when antibiotic resistance spreads, as it inevitably will even more than it has already, because animal genes coding for this resistance are used in some biotech foods? Consumption of such foods can cause horizontal gene transfer to consumers because digestion is not as simple as biotech would like it to be. Back in 1992, when biotechnology began, the FDA warned about this "serious health hazard". Human extinction is another interesting side effect to contemplate: the Austrian government released research results in November last year confirming that GM crops threaten human fertility in both sexes; Austria banned all biotech foods.

In May of this year, the American Academy of Environmental Medicine formally warned against GMO consumption in any form; their member physicians advise their patients to avoid such foods totally, especially GM soy products (download their report from newsletter@responsibletechnoogy.org, May 20, 2009).

Eventually, inherent inconsistencies cause cracks in the edifice and let in some light. Back in 1999, when it looked like GM foods were going to take the world

by storm, the cafeteria in Monsanto's UK headquarters at High Wycombe posted a policy notice stating that "in response to concerns raised by our customers ... we have decided to remove, as far as possible, genetically modified soy and maize from all food products served [here]... to ensure that you, the customer, can feel confident in the food we serve."

Actually, this really is all about control, not health or global food security. When the US invaded Iraq, where agriculture began some 10,000 years ago, the infamous Order 81 enforced that Iraqi farmers can no longer save seed and breed new varieties conventionally, but may use only GM seeds. (www.INEAS.org)

The colossal stupidity, on which biotech is based, truly boggles the mind: it took some four billion years for all of life's genes to evolve in an intricate dance with changing environments, conjuring up a complexity of interdependence that is characterized by myriad interactions of absolute specificity. Then, along come these yahoos and mix and match genes to serve some nutbar dream of wealth and world domination, developed from the economical models fantasizing about limitless growth - a pipe-dream that came up during a mere nano-second in life's evolutionary process. What are these guys smoking, snorting, or mainlining?

If you want a quick, thumbnail sketch of what they are thinking (such as it is), get one of their coloring books for children (www.whybiotech.com).

TOWARDS SOME SOLUTIONS

Biotech food production is just part of the problem. Go see the newly released documentary, Food Inc. Director Robert Kenner "pulls back the curtain on the industrial food system in the United States and connects the dots between factory farming and E.coli outbreaks, government subsidies and the diabetes epidemic - even slaughterhouses and illegal immigration [and finds that] it is "fundamentally unsustainable" and "as unrealistic as our credit system. But you know what? It's going to crack!" (Philadelphia Daily News, June 15, 2009).

A University of Michigan study, reported in February 2009, showed a clear association between risk of stroke and the number of fast-food restaurants in the neighborhood. Neighborhoods with the lowest number of such restaurants had the least number of strokes. The more processed a food, the more biotech content.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency recently confirmed that all fresh cut, ready to eat vegetables are treated with chlorine. Neurotoxic and carcinogenic MSG is routinely sprayed on fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains, and seeds, even on what goes into babyfood (www.rense.com, April 20, 2009). A new book Squeezed: What You Don't Know About Orange Juice by Alissa Hamilton is a real stomach churner - fresh-squeezed organic oranges for me only, forever. About 70% of conventionally raised broiler chickens are loaded with antibiotics (even those Tyson Foods claims are "raised without antibiotics" - they inject the eggs). Both chickens and pigs have plenty of arsenic in their conventional feeds (www.noccawood.ca and www.pressandguide.com). The soy protein used in so-called "natural" foods and baby formula is often saturated with a toxic solvent called hexane (www.naturalnews.com May 20,2009). Irradiated cat food proved a killer for cats; in the UK cat food may not be irradiated anymore. Farmed fish not only have less essential fatty acid content than wild ones, but are now the victims of a new

bacterium which threatens to wipe out the fisheries, and also may cause Mad Cow disease. Here come the Mad Fish (Norwegian School of Veterinary Science, November 21, 2008.)

Now, what really scares me is the recent discovery, described by neonatologist Dr. Paul Winchester, that the health problems caused by exposure to pesticides can be transferred to the baby via sperm or eggs: the toxin-induced disease state can be passed on to the next generation (ahhaq@aeha-quebec.ca, April 12, 2009). I am most grateful to the McGuinty government for passing the province-wide ban on use and sale of some 250 pesticides and some 80 additional ingredients for lawn and garden use. This is especially impressive when considering that Dow Chemical's plan to sue Canada over Quebec's earlier ban under NAFTA Chapter 11 did not deter Ontario from passing this legislation. We should all support the federal bill C-363 (NDP – Pat Martin, Winnipeg) to have this ban throughout Canada.

McDonald's, the largest potato buyer in North America, will now affect all potato farming because shareholders, in collaboration with Investor Environmental Health Network, demanded a substantial reduction in pesticide use on potatoes destined to feed the billions.

Research in the 2002, Jeffrey Smith reports, showed that food molecules act like hormones and neurotransmitters. Young rats fed biotech food became like ADHD kids. The European Journal of Clinical Nutrition (December 5, 2007) reported that junk food was indeed a major cause of well-known behavior problems and stopping its availability made the kids normal. This, and a study on food coloring in the Lancet that same year prompted Australia's largest supermarket chain, Aldi, to remove food coloring and certain preservatives like benzoate, propionates and synthetic antioxidants from packaged foods.

In September last year, California passed a law that protects farmers from biotech companies who now are responsible for genetic contamination from biotech field crops. Meanwhile, organic manure has been proven to be superior to synthetics, and Dr. Shiv Chopra reported that bovine growth hormone has been stopped in the US as well. And thank you – Guelph University's organic agriculture program continues to thrive. Happily, on June 17, Canada agreed to adopt the US organic farming and food standards; those are based on a decade-long battle against the FDA and Big Agriculture which tried their best to water down those standards, but failed. Now we have those standards, too, across the country; occasionally our friends down south force us into something good.

When Michelle Obama scared the biotech honchos with her organic garden in the White House, she was signaling a return to the great tradition of good sense as demonstrated by Auburn University, Alabama, which has maintained traditional farming plots for 110 years. They still outperform "modern" methods in every way (Agronomy Journal, 2008; 100 (5):1493ff). We can do the same.

Resources:

Chopra, Shiv. *Corrupt to the Core – Memoirs of A Health Canada Whistleblower*, Kos 2009; book \$ 30, CD \$ 20 call 519-927-1049

Smith, Jeffrey M., *Genetic Roulette*, Yes! Books 2007. Orders 519-92-1049 for \$ 30 plus shipping/GST

Smith, Jeffrey M. *Seeds of Deception*, Yes! 2004 ditto

GMO Trilogy – *Unnatural Selection, Hidden Dangers in Kids' Meals, You're eating WHAT?* DVD. Orders 519-927-1049, for \$ 25 plus shipping/GST

For research showing the nutritional content of conventional food compared to organic google International Academy of Nutrition and Preventive Medicine, Biodynamics, the November 2008 issue of the CCPA Monitor, and

www.organic_center.org

www.soilandhealth.org

www.i-sis.dircon.co-uk

www.responsibletechnology.org

www.orthomolecularhealth.com

www.helpyourselfcommunity.org

www.verifiedeggs.com check to buy omega-3 containing eggs from humanely treated animals

www.ewg.org download free guide to pesticide-free produce

www.stjohnsbakery.com in Toronto, for Red Fife flour and healthy breads