

Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Notes....

A periodic publication of the Lopez Community Land Trust SARD program



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San Juan Islands Bio-Reserve? GMO-Free Seed?

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are not just another natural method of plant breeding. GMO proponents have always claimed that GM is just an extension of natural plant breeding. This is false. Genetic engineering is different from traditional cross breeding, where genes can only be exchanged between closely related species. Natural reproduction or breeding can only occur between closely related forms of life (e.g. cats with cats, wheat with wheat, NOT cats with dogs; NOT wheat with tomatoes or fish. Not so with GMOs.



GMOs are made when genes from one plant or animal are manually inserted into the DNA of another plant or animal to produce specific traits. The resulting organism is

called *transgenic* or a *GMO*. Transgenics take genes from completely different species and inserts them into each other. For example, scientists in Taiwan have succeeded at **inserting jellyfish genes into pigs in order to make them glow in the dark.**

The GM transformation process is crude, imprecise and causes widespread mutations resulting in major changes to the plant's DNA blueprint, unnaturally altering its functioning in unpredictable and potentially harmful ways. *Once released into the environment, genetically engineered organisms cannot be cleaned up or recalled.* Unlike chemical contamination which can at least be contained in the best of circumstances, genetic pollution cannot be isolated and separated from the environment in which it is spreading. Moreover, **organic crops are**

being contaminated with GMOs from the drift of gene-altered pollen. This creates enormous problems for organic growers, one of which is the fact that USDA regulations for organic foods specifically prohibit GMOs.

The islands are a perfect place to protect organic plants from GMO contamination. Heritage and GMO-free seed are becoming a rare commodity, and thus more valuable in the marketplace. The world's largest plant breeders, Monsanto, Syngenta, Dupont, and Dow control most of the seed market with their



GMO corn, soy, cotton and canola. They are also the world's largest agri-chemical companies. Before it was acquired by Monsanto, Seminis eliminated 2,000

varieties of seeds from its inventory. The seeds eliminated were the older, open-pollinated, **heirloom varieties.** They were eliminated because they were **not patented or genetically modified, which means they are not profitable for GM companies.**

So what about a Bio-Reserve?



GMO-Free Seed?

The “coexistence” of Genetically Modified (GM) crops and non-GM crops is not possible because of pollen drift. The now famous Percy Schmeiser court case with Monsanto is a critical example of the problem of pollen drift and its implications for a farmer. Any Lopez citizen is susceptible to having his or her crops contaminated without even knowing it, losing the rights to their quality organic crop. It seems imperative to promote and maintain the positive image that San Juan County products have on the market. Perhaps San Juan County or the State Department of Agriculture could declare San Juan County

as a bio-reserve, that is, GMO-free seed area, in order to protect the market for organics and other local farm produce.

Let us know what you think....

GMOs could create foods that are toxic, allergenic and less nutritious than their non-GM counterparts. They cannot be recalled and could harm biodiversity, causing irreversible changes to our food supply, and possibly serious effects on human and animal health.

Advocates of GM products say that they are simply trying to feed a hungry world. We are trying to provide safe, secure food supplies for the world. GM products have not been proven safe for human or livestock consumption. We are looking for ways to protect our livestock, our plant stock, our livelihoods, and ourselves. Send your suggestions to: lcltda@rockisland.com, or mail them to LCLT, PO Box 25, Lopez Island, WA 98261.

Resources for your own investigation: <http://www.seedalliance.org/index.php?page=RRBeetPR> ; <http://www.cornucopia.org/>; <http://www.highmowingseeds.com> ; <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/> ; <http://hawaiiseed.org/> ; <http://www.seedsofdeception.com/Public/Home/index.cfm> ; <http://caivn.org/article/2010/05/01/california-files-legal-brief-opposing-monsanto-us-supreme-court> ; <http://www.organicconsumers.org/gelink.cfm> ; <http://www.percyschmeiser.com/> ; <http://www.nongmoproject.org/>



Take the Pledge?

We the undersigned will not plant GM seeds until we are sure that they will not threaten our neighbors or our environment.

Signature _____ Date: _____

Name Printed: _____

Contact: email and/or snail mail _____

Return to LCLT, PO Box 25, Lopez Island, WA 98261, or email the same to: lcltda@rockisland.com.
