

A Maizing Grace

On 31 March 2003 Bayer Crop Science announced their decision to withdraw from the commercialisation of Chardon LL GM Maize. Since 1994, 53 GM crop varieties have been proposed for commercialisation in the UK. Following the recent removal of Syngenta's two sugar beet varieties, and the front runner-Chardon LL, there are now only two crops left: one winter oilseed rape and one spring oilseed rape both owned by Bayer CropScience. Neither of these, can even be considered for commercialisation until 2008. This effectively means that the threat of widespread GM cultivation in the country is over for "the foreseeable future" according to Elliott Morley, the Environment Minister.

On the 9 March Margaret Beckett's finally made the much leaked announcement about the commercialisation of Chardon. This stated that on the basis of the farm-scale trial results the government will not back GM sugar beet or GM oilseed rape but, despite huge public opposition, would back the commercial growing of GM fodder maize.

"The fact that the government is prepared to allow GM crops is a big symbolic step forward,"

blustered Bayer CropScience head Julian Little. "But I'd be very ambitious if I thought there would be any commercial plantings in

2005...I've stopped holding my breath because I keep going blue."

Indeed. The conditions attached to Chardon included various couched references to deferring final placing on the National Seedlist until new regulations were established. On the 18 March the Scottish assembly lost the debate to block approval by one vote. On 24 March the Welsh Assembly's Environment Minister (who has a UK veto on the listing of GM seeds) announced that he would not add Chardon LL to the Seed List without the Assembly having a free vote on the issue. It was made clear that the outcome would depend on Corporate liability for the plants being established, and legislation surrounding co-existence with non GM crops being put in place.

Then there was the requirement for statutory guidelines governing Chardons' cultivation and restricting it to the same spraying regimes as were used in the Farm Scale Evaluations. In all other places where Chardon is grown commercially the highly damaging Atroazine (not used in the trials) is a vital component for productivity.

Two weeks later Bayer said that the delays generated by these restrictions would put back the final selling of their product for up to two years, increase the variety's obsolescence and render it "commercially non-viable". The European Part C consent for all GM maize varieties based on T25 (including Chardon LL) runs out in October 2006. For more on what caused the delays to Chardon see inside back page.

Wot, no trials?

Grassroots research has revealed that none of the Gene Giants, Syngenta, Monsanto and Bayer, are doing any field trials of GM crops this year, for the first time in the last 10 years. As reported in issue 25, Bayer CropScience halted their UK field trials in autumn 2003 because the government refused to let them conceal their locations. It was expected that

Syngenta would plant R&D trials of their #77 sugar beet this spring. In 2003 they notified DEFRA of their test site locations by mid Feb, but as of early April, notifications for trials for this year have yet to be received... [http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/gm/regulation/trials.htm] See the inside back page for further details of this year's only field trial.

Off with their heads

Bayer CropScience sacked the bosses of its Bioscience Divisions throughout Europe in February.

Among those made redundant is Dr Paul Rylott, Bayer's UK head of Bioscience. On 21st January he delivered a stirring speech on 'how to manage consumer response to biotechnology', at a conference on Managing and Predicting Crisis in the Food Industry. As he took his place in the queue for his buffet dinner a polite call of "Mr Rylott?" brought him face to face with a chocolate fudge cake (skipped and stale) and the shout "That's for GM!"

The Government's approval of Chardon LL seemed to herald a upbeat departure for Paul, however with Bayer's withdrawal of its GM Maize, this soon turned rather sour. Mr Rylott has yet to find new employment. For more details on the pieing and other actions against Bayer, see;

www.stopbayergm.org



IT MAKES YOU SICK

Studies currently being conducted by the Norwegian Institute for Gene Ecology, have revealed potentially serious health dangers from GM. Last October DrTerje Traavik, was asked to analyse blood samples from 39 of a 100 Philippino villagers who had been living next to a crop of bt GM maize and fallen ill. Although the results of his study are not yet formally published or peer reviewed, the three preliminary findings were that:

1. Bt-maize (Dekalb 818 YG), during pollination, may have triggered disease in people living near the maize field in the Philippines.
2. The cauliflower mosaic virus (CaMV) promoter, used in most GM foods, was found intact in rat tissues two hours, six hours, and three days after it was mixed into a single meal, and was also confirmed to be active in human cells.
3. Genetically engineered pox viruses in cell cultures recombined with natural viruses to create new hybrid viruses with unpredictable and potentially dangerous characteristics.

On 26.03 Around 40 Greenpeace activists occupied a field in northern Switzerland which was the site of the country's first outdoor trial of GM wheat.

www.abs-cbnnews.com/NewsStory.aspx?section=Provincial&id=46224

Leader of the 10 million strong Karnataka State Farmers' Association & founder of the Legendary 'Cremate Monsanto' Campaign.



Prof Nanjudaswamy
1938-2004

Despite his frail posture Professor Nanjudaswamy was always ready to brave the storm, whether it was uprooting Bt cotton plants, laying a siege around Monsanto's office in Bangalore, or ransacking the company's office, he was never afraid of the police batons nor did a possible jail term intimidate him.

He was an angry man and a good one. He will be missed.

BONZA, no canola



gratuitous Charlene shot, sorry

In January, the Australian Federal government gave approval to GM oilseed rape (canola) despite massive popular opposition. In the next 2

months it's decision was overruled by every Oz State. Western Australian and Tasmania imposed outright bans and Victoria and South Australia have established moratoriums. Bayer are said to be re-considering their future in the Antipodes... .

New South Wales is the latest state to say no but three small comparative trials of Canola, confined to individual farms, are to get the go-ahead there. Activists are mobilising in the area.

Meanwhile in New Zealand there have been several demos and actions, from the Prime Minister being harangued about the planting of GM onions to arrests after a supermarket chicken oven rotisserie was cordoned off. Activists in Auckland redecorated bus stop ads to remind the wider public that their Easter may not be GM-Free.

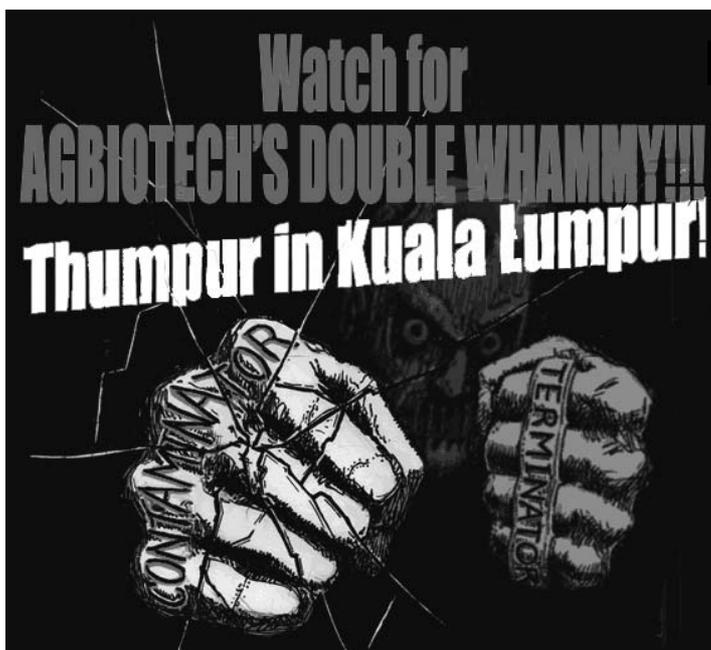
Canada is the worlds second biggest grower of GM crops, and the world's leading wheat grower- but it's farmers and food industry are not impressed with Monsanto's GM wheat.

Against the Grain

The Canadian Wheat Board surveyed the nations that buy it's wheat and found that if GM wheat were grown then 87% of its customers would buy no wheat from Canada at all. Canada's main customer, Japan, is the most vocal opponent. 414 Japanese organisations have registered their protests. But the Canadian Government has explained that its decision must be based only on "sound science" - supplied by Monsanto, and not economic reasons.

http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,9161388%255E30417,00.html

www.nipawjournal.com/story.php?id=96002



scary picture, better outcome

Eighty six nations have ignored the US and agreed international trade rules on GM food and crops. The Biosafety Protocol, originally conceived of 4 years ago was finally ratified at the UN's conference on Biodiversity in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, this February. The protocol gives signatories the right to fully documented traceability and prior informed consent on GM imports, and the right to refuse such imports on the basis of concerns about GM. 86 nations formally ratified the treaty, while a further 14 supported it in principle.

www.commondreams.org/news/2004/02/27/09.htm

Despite the fact that the US wasn't a signatory, and therefore couldn't officially take part in the process, it still sent some 100 lobbyists who set about trying to scupper the deal (hence the concern prior to the meeting from the glam graphics department of the etc group, above left). However, thanks to the amazing efforts of many, especially the Ethiopian environment minister Tewolde Egziabher, the legislation is now fully established. America has issued the usual threats of 'serious consequences'.

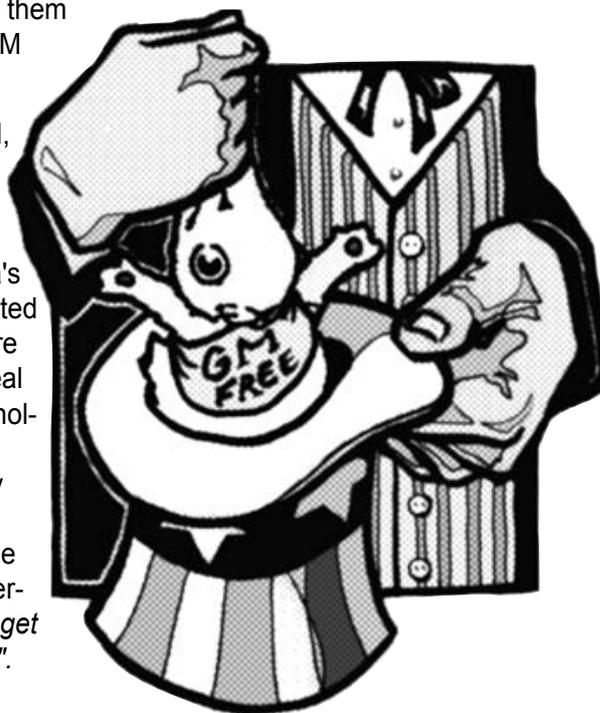
Tewolde- we like this man



Getting in a GM free State

Mendocino county has become the first region in the US it declare itself a GM free zone. On 2nd March, in an unprecedented referendum, the 47,000 inhabitants of the area were polled on whether they wished to ban the growing of GM crops in the county. Monsanto spent \$57 per head on failing to persuade them that any decision against GM would be 'undemocratic'.

Following Mendocino's lead, it now seems that bans on genetically modified crops are being considered in nearly one-fifth of California's 58 counties. Long frustrated American GM activists are ecstatic about this first real chance to tackle biotechnology in its homeland. Monsanto have said they intend to try and take Mendocino to court on the ruling, declaring that otherwise "the situation could get completely out of control".



drugs in my corn flakes?

Even in the US food industry, there are now growing concerns about modified pharmaceutical crops.

After the ProdiGene scandal (in which 500,000 bushels of soy were contaminated with biopharmaceutical corn.) two large US industrial corporations, which had so far supported transgenic research, began to reconsider their positions. The Grocery Manufacturers Association has raised objections to the crops and the National Food Processors Association. requested of the USDA; "that there be no use of food or feed crops to produce plant made pharmaceuticals or industrial chemicals without a hundred percent guarantee against any contamination of the food or feed supply".

Whine & Cheese parties



Across the country on Sat 28 Feb, in seven different Sainsbury's supermarkets, disgruntled shoppers took to the aisles to protest against the company's ongoing use of GM to feed the cows that produce their dairy products.

In Exeter, Sherbourne, Taunton, Coventry, Bracknell, Plymouth and London shoppers were leafleted, GM fed dairy products labelled, and assorted pantomime cows ran amok.

Sainsbury's are seen as the first domino in the chain that needs pushing, because the big boys like Tesco won't go until they do, and they're financially vulnerable at the moment. They're also already being targeted by Greenpeace who sent a herd of some 40 cows into their flagship store on the 20th February.



leafleting in Lancaster

stickering the town with information about the supermarkets policy had staff running round trying to remove all the negative advertising.

In Exeter two dancing Friesians occupied the roof, while a banner lifted on giant helium balloons hung from the ceiling inside the store. The tannoy was briefly taken over by protesters. A cow and a giant mutant maize handed out leaflets inside, before being forcibly ejected.



off their trolleys in Exeter

Three of the checkout girls spent their break outside with the protesters, and quietly said- 'good on you, we agree'. The police were called, but there were no arrests, despite the entire milk and dairy stock being labelled by 17 other protesters, and the deputy manager running out screaming to the cops *"they've done criminal damage to my Stilton!"*. Almost all of the labelled products were subsequently removed by staff.

In London, labellers observed other shoppers pausing over products with warning labels on, and picking up those without.

These are the tactics that got GM ingredients labelled and off the supermarket shelves five years ago- and started the seizing-up of the Biotech industry.

They work.

If you want an info pack with action ideas, labels and Sainsbury's-specific leaflets contact GEN via 01803 840098.

Meanwhile ring up Sainsbury's on their hotline 0800 636262 and tell them what you think, or write to Sir Peter Davis, Group Chief Executive, J Sainsbury's PLC, 33 Holborn, London, EC1N 2HT.



WHY LORD SAINSBURY HAS TO GO

Lord Sainsbury of Turville, unelected minister for trade and industry, sits on the Sci-Bio Committee and is responsible for national policy on biotechnology including GM crops and foods. It all began in September 1997 when David Sainsbury gave Labour its biggest ever single donation. Days later Blair gave him a life peerage and a year on he became Minister for Science. By 2003 he had given over £11 million to the Labour Party.

He established and funds the Sainsbury Laboratory at the John Innes Centre in Norwich. The Centres' head Professor Jonathan D. G. Jones FRS, was a signatory of the letter to Tony Blair from 114 scientists deploring the government's supposed lack of support for GM.

Another glaring conflict of interest concerns his blind trust investments, which would make millions if the commercial growing of GM crops went ahead. Sainsbury's blind trust contains shares from a number of companies, including Diatech Ltd and Innotech Investments -whose technology Monsanto will likely use in the next generation of GM crops. Not to mention his 13% stake in the J Sainsbury supermarket chain.

With the defeat of Chardon LL, there's still one last backdoor for GM into Britain- the animal feed industry. The dairy sector continues to use 400, thousand to 2000 thousand tonnes of imported GM soya every year to feed its cows. Despite the fact that and most of the big supermarkets promised three years ago to stop selling products which come from animals fed GM, they have so far failed to do so. This tacit support of GM soya as a main export form places like Argentina is disastrous (see article below). And unless we really finish off the market for all GM in the UK now, it will come back to haunt us in three or four years time, with new commercialisation applications.

ANIMAL FEED- The final frontier

On 27 March a new alliance of activists and farmers formed to try and deal with the dual threats of GM feed and low milk

prices. The current crisis in dairy farming- with farmers being paid less for their milk than it costs to produce, is causing hundreds of small independent farms to go bankrupt, or sell out to huge new corporate conglomerates. It's estimated that one farmer or farm labourer commits suicide every week in the UK. If this process isn't halted then one of the worst outcomes of GM commercialisation- the control of our countryside by multinationals, will happen anyway. All the farming groups involved are committed to de-intensifying their industry and getting GM out of the food chain. Some have experience with large-scale direct action. The hope is that by combining tactics, skills and numbers we present a tough new alliance that makes it clear that both consumers and producers can't be dismissed by the supermarkets any longer. Keep your ears open for further developments...

SOYA SOLIDARITY

The GM soya the UK imports for animal feed from Argentina has a nasty recent history.

Despite the fact that soya is totally alien to Argentinas culture and diet, Cargill Seeds and the Chevron Texaco oil company teamed up with the Argentine Association of Direct Seed Producers to promote soya as the solution to the malnutrition problem in the country. Malnutrition which was exacerbated by the IMF refusal to bail Argentina out of the crisis that the IMF created.

Meanwhile, also due to the IMF-induced collapse of Argentinas economy 2 years ago, Monsanto have been unable to collect royalties for the GM seeds they've been pushing. So they have persuaded the government to levy a 'GM tax' on all soya bean and corn farmers, whether they are using Monsanto's patented seeds or not. This must be particularly galling for farmers who were once part of a diverse agricultural system which has been transformed into a soya-bean monoculture. In the last 10 years, the amount of soya grown has nearly tripled, and it is almost 100% GM. The countryside is being left empty as the farm workers are displaced by aeroplanes and agribusiness infrastructure.

The rise of soya crops has decimated the once strong dairy industry (Argentina now has to import milk from Uruguay) and the felling of forests is causing unprecedented floods. In the high-mountain provinces, the subtropical Yungas region is being felled at such a rate that the ancient cloud forest is expected to become extinct in five years. Illness is spreading, as disease carrying insects and animals are displaced and move to new territories.

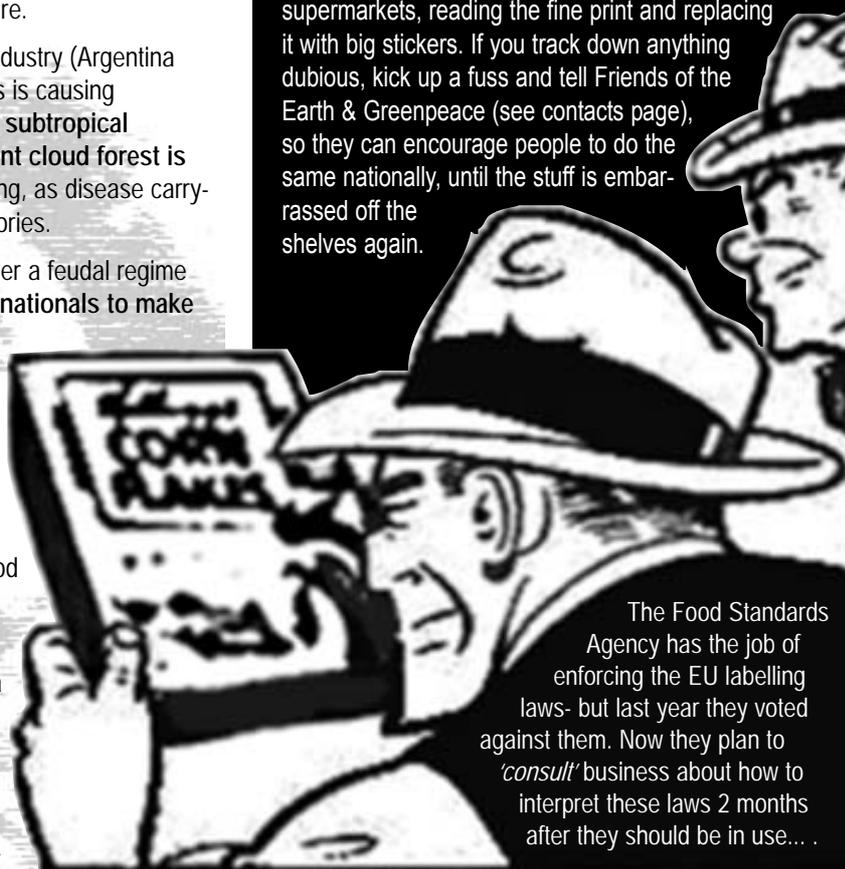
In Santiago del Estero (a region which has been suffering under a feudal regime for decades) local collaborators are working with the multinationals to make way for soya by bulldozing farmers homes. The farmers' movement MOCASE (Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero) is trying to resist this with organic agriculture, reforestation, solar and wind power and local crafts. But paramilitaries have tortured MOCASE members, who also suffer political persecution. The international farmers' movement Via Campesina is also campaigning for food sovereignty in the area, and the right for countries to produce and protect the food they need.

Feeding UK cattle with GM soya is directly linked to the displacement of farming communities from their land in Argentina and increasingly Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay. Resorting to GM soya means poverty and hunger in regions of Latin America. For more info check out. www.viacampesina.org, or www.alerta-salta.org. And tell the Argentine Ambassador what you think on, 0207-3181300, or embar.ru@btclick.com.

Gene Detectives Needed

From 18 April all products that contain ingredients produced from GMOs, must be labelled. Unlike current labelling, which is relies on intact GM DNA being tested for, the new system will be almost entirely dependent on the new traceability rules that accompany it. The rules also set up a centralised procedure to consider applications to grow and market GMOs in the EU.

Oils and leithins will now have to be labelled. But the labels are likely to be very small, and there are calls for people to act as 'Gene Detectives'- going into supermarkets, reading the fine print and replacing it with big stickers. If you track down anything dubious, kick up a fuss and tell Friends of the Earth & Greenpeace (see contacts page), so they can encourage people to do the same nationally, until the stuff is embarrassed off the shelves again.



The Food Standards Agency has the job of enforcing the EU labelling laws- but last year they voted against them. Now they plan to 'consult' business about how to interpret these laws 2 months after they should be in use...

Useful Contacts Spring 2004

together these groups make up
GEN
(the Genetic Engineering
Network)

LOCAL GROUPS

**AYLESBURY SHOPPERS
CONCERNED ABOUT FOOD
(SCOF)** 01296 484535

**BERKSHIRE, GREEN
WATCH**
Doreen Wyatt on 01344
452893 or 07798 702042

**BRIGHTON GENETIX
RESISTANCE** 01273 628441
rowantilly@gn.apc.org

BRISTOL GE GROUPS
Kebele 0117 939 9469
Wilf Mound 0117 963 5740

CARMARTHEN GENE CARE
01267 234729

CAMBRIDGE CONCERNS
01223 562364
jc@home.cam.net.uk

CARDIFF 02920 394745
geoffoak2000@yahoo.co.uk

CASTLE CARY Somerset
01749 860689
louise@ukonline.co.uk

CHINNOR GM CAMPAIGN
Oxfordshire 01844 353748
maggiewestby@bigfoot.com

**COLCHESTER GM
CAMPAIGN**
Andy 07931 638938
Lreyno@essex.ac.uk

CORNWALL (GAFF)
01326 250056
gaffal@gaff73.freemove.co.uk

**CORNWALL
REAL FOOD CAMPAIGN**
valmai@supanet.com

COVENTRY GE GROUP
02476 663031
covpeace@gn.apc.org

FIFE AGAINST GMO
carlo.morelli@virgin.net

GM-FREE CYMRU (Wales)
01348 837 614
www.gmfreecymru.co.uk

**DEVIZES & MARLBOROUGH
FoE**
01672 513950

**DORSET (Jane & the N.
Dorset Green Party)**
01258 817262
01777 858587

GLASTONBURY GE GROUP
01458 834787

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
she_d@hotmail.com

**HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS
GM CONCERN** 01381
600205 or 07990524280

HOLSWORTHY
01409 254450
cft-dlee@supanet.com

**N. LANCASHIRE REAL
FOOD GROUP** 01524
811066 cherith@which.net

GM ACTION LANCASTER
The Basement, 78a Penny
St, Lancaster, email: thebase-
ment@webtribe.net

LEEDS 0113 262 9365

LINCOLNSHIRE (Gaia Trust)
01507 490112
kateatgaia@tiscali.co.uk

LIVERPOOL GE GROUP
0151 722 7561

MANCHESTER EF!
0161 226 6814
mancef@nematode.freemove.
co.uk

NEWCASTLE 07930 741052
tapp@newcastle54.freemove.
co.uk

NORFOLK NGIN 01603
624021 (or 625188)
01328 738390
www.ngin.org.uk

**NORTHAMPTON GE
GROUP**
01604 647916

NOTTINGHAM 0845
4589595 info@veggies.org.uk

**OXFORD GENETICS
ACTION & OXY-GENE**
07796 430141
holly@gn.apc.org

**PLYMOUTH GENETICS
GROUP** 01752 892676
plymgm@hotmail.com

**RYEDALE AGAINST GMOs
(RAGMO)** 01653 696748
josiedowns@care4free.net or
01751) 417131
johnclark@gmfreeryedale.org
.uk

**SCARBOROUGH AGAINST
GE** 01723 375533
sage@envoy.dircon.co.uk

SCOTTISH GENETIX ACTION
scottishgenetix@ziplip.com
Fife & Central
01333 310902

SHEFFIELD AGAINST GE
0114 273 1978
gaz_guzzler@yahoo.com

**SHREWSBURY FOOD
ACTION (Shropshire)**
paola@cwcom.net

SOMERSET AGAINST GE
01749 813787

**SOUTHPORT PEOPLE AGAINST
GE** 01704 564524
Lolanlen@hotmail.com

**SOUTH WARWICK GM
ACTION GROUP**
07973 510 652

SWINDON AGAINST GMOs
01793 790438
sbriley@gn.apc.org

S. YORKSHIRE GEN
01226 764279
pp3office@aol.com

TAUNTON (FoE)
01823 286311

TAVISTOCK 01822 614430

**TOTNES GENETICS GROUP
(TOGG)** 01803 840098
info@togg.org.uk
www.togg.org.uk

GE FREE WALES
02920 229577
cymru@foe.co.uk

WELLINGTON 01823 664776
doohlally@yahoo.co.uk

WHITBY (WAGE)
01947 606189
tricia.keith@btopenworld.co.uk

NATIONAL GROUPS

ACTION AID
020 7561 7611
foodrights@actionaid.org.uk
www.actionaid.org

**ACTION ON INDUSTRIAL
AGRICULTURE**
agricultureaction@yahoo.com

BU AGAINST VIVESECTION
020 7700 4888 info@buav.org
www.buav.org

**COMPASSION IN WORLD
FARMING** 01730 264208
compassion@ciwf.co.uk

CORPORATE WATCH
01865 791391
mail@corporatwatch.org
www.corporatwatch.org.uk

EARTHFIRST! ACTION UPDATE
0161 226 6814
mail@actionupdate.org.uk

FIVE-YEAR FREEZE
020 7837 0642
enquiry@fiveyearfreeze.org
www.fiveyearfreeze.org

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH
020 7490 1555
info@foe.co.uk www.foe.co.uk

THE GAIA FOUNDATION
020 7435 5000
gaia@gaiagnet.org

GE-FREE FORESTRY (GEFF)
geffcoalition@hotmail.com
Also contact WEN

GENEWATCH UK
01298 871898
mail@genewatch.org

GENETIC CONCERN
00 3531 4760360

GENETICS FORUM
020 7837 9229
geneticsforum@gn.apc.org
GENETIC FOOD ALERT
01803 868523
rjvint@globalnet.co.uk

GMO CAMPAIGN
01865 513224

GM PRISONER SUPPORT
0161 226 6814

GREENPEACE UK LTD
020 7865 8100
info@uk.greenpeace.org
www.greenpeace.org.uk

GROWING AWARENESS
00 3532 820232
growingawareness@indigo.ie

**HENRY DOUBLEDAY
RESEARCH ASSOC.**
01203 303517
rog@hdra.org.uk
www.hdra.org.uk

HUMAN GENETICS ALERT
020 7704 6100

**INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY
FOR ECOLOGY AND
CULTURE** 01803 868650
isecuk@gn.apc.org

NATIONWIDE FOOD SURVEY
www.wkweb4.cableinet.co.uk/
pbrown/index.htm

NATURAL LAW PARTY
01962 852122
nlpwessex@bigfoot.com

**NORTHERN ALLIANCE
FOR SUSTAINABILITY**
020 8672 3454
iza@cpa-iza.u-net.com

**SCOTTISH CONSUMERS'
ASSOCIATION FOR
NATURAL FOOD**
0141 334 4886
georgestidolph@btinternet.com

SOIL ASSOCIATION
0117 987 4562
action@soilassociation.org
www.soilassociation.org

TROLLEY THEATRE
trolleytheatre@bigfoot.com
www.trolleytheatre.org

**UNCAGED (INCL. XENO-
TRANSPLANTATION CONCERN)**
0114 272 2220
uncaged.anti-viv@ dial.
pipex.com
www.xenodiaries.co.uk

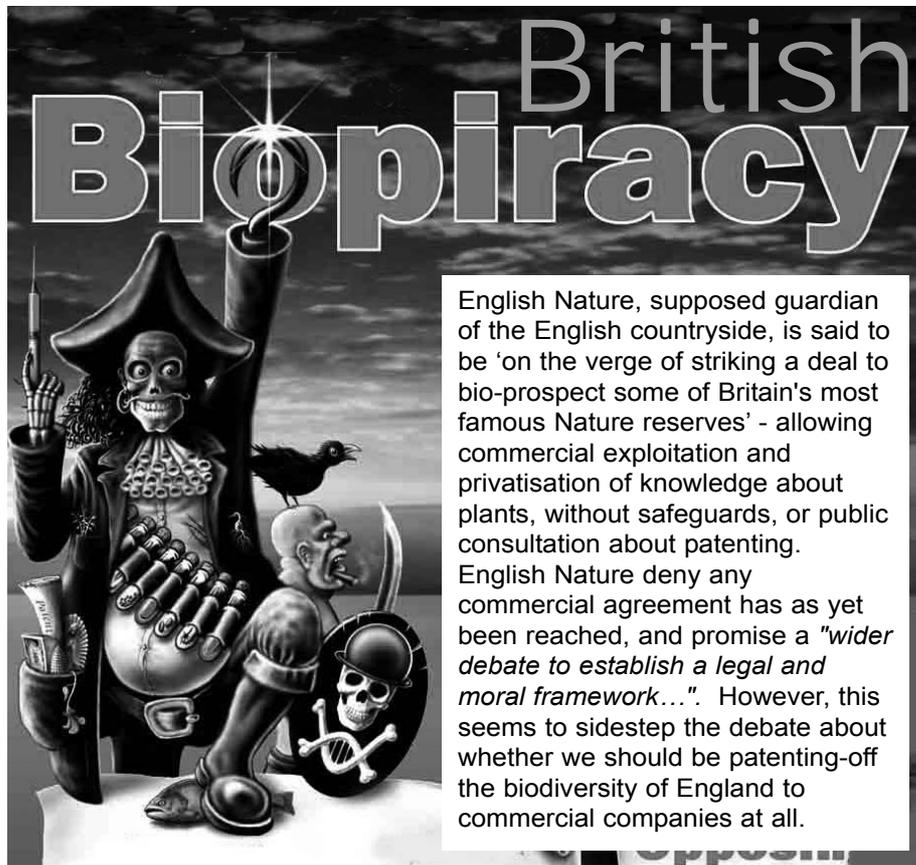
**WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL
NETWORK** 020 7481 9004
www.gn.apc.org/wen



Yet more 'GM free zones' form- North Dorset and
Oxfordshire councils are the latest to sign up to article 19
of the EU directive which allows areas to challenge GM.

Picture by Stig for the Eic group's biography
and cog awards 2004. For the full list see
the splendid www.captainhookawards.org

If there isn't a listing for a group in
your area, EarthFirst!, Friends of the
Earth or Greenpeace may have a
local group working on GM. If they
don't, set one up yourself. Contact
the GEN worker for tips and support
0845 330 4584 or email
info@geneticsaction.org.uk



English Nature, supposed guardian of the English countryside, is said to be 'on the verge of striking a deal to bio-prospect some of Britain's most famous Nature reserves' - allowing commercial exploitation and privatisation of knowledge about plants, without safeguards, or public consultation about patenting. English Nature deny any commercial agreement has as yet been reached, and promise a "wider debate to establish a legal and moral framework...". However, this seems to sidestep the debate about whether we should be patenting-off the biodiversity of England to commercial companies at all.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE TRIALS GONE?

(Continued from front page)

Of course the final delays imposed on Chardon LL by the government have only become a crucial factor because Chardon has already been held up for five years by an incredible diversity of tactics. Many have speculated that even if Bayer's real motives for pulling out were based on issues such as liability and spray regimes, then these themselves were only imposed by the political climate surrounding the issue after years of resistance. For all those who spent strenuous nights in fields, promoted and participated in the Chardon LL seed listing hearings or worked for years speaking to local, central and European government, and for the thousands who rejected GM at the till, this is a remarkable victory. A multi billion-dollar industry, which eight years ago assumed it could walk into our food and fields and take control of our agriculture, is being held at bay here. We should all be proud of ourselves, we've changed the world.

Normally the Update would now bring you a table showing where all the GM crop test sites are for the coming months. However, as there is only one test site this year, here's a review instead, based on information from www.geneticsaction.org.uk/testsites. Overall 91 trials out of 476 have been damaged or destroyed in the last five years. This has had a significant impact on the industry because the majority of those targeted were the national seedlisting trials, which are compulsory for the seed licensing process .

At present the only GM crops trial being carried out this year is a research and development trial of GM peas being done by the John Innes Centre in Norwich, (TG 180070). This is the second year of a 2 year trial. See www.defra.gov.uk/environment/gm/regulation/consents/pdf/03-r29-04.pdf

Year	Total no of trials	No of FarmScale Damaged	Evaluations Destroyed	No of Non-FSE trials	No of non-FSEs Damaged	No of non-FSEs Destroyed
1999-2000	134	11	1	83	1	24
2000-1	159	6	1	51	0	6
2001-2	140	15	2	27	4	3
2002-3	42	3	2	23	4	8
2003-4	1 (yippee!)	0	0	1	0	0

Grow yer own

Almost by accident, John Clark from GM free Ryedale has started a new nationwide Maize Plant Campaign. Here he explains the ideas behind it:

According to the EU, if permission were ever given for GM maize there must be strict regulations. There must be a known 'separation distance' between any proposed GM maize and all nearby non-GM crops. If a large number of people were to grow non-GM maize the sorting out of the separation distances would become extremely difficult. We all have the 'right' to uncontaminated food and GM-free allotments and gardens.

The Biotech companies are reluctant to accept responsibility for any damage they may cause, but In the case of individuals growing GM free maize in their garden the situation is even more complicated. Who tests it for GM? How much compensation do we receive? How much is zero food miles, organically grown, freshly-picked corn on the cob worth? The answer is 'priceless'.

The most important part of the Maize Plant Campaign is the compiling of a list of maize growers. DEFRA will ignore those growing maize unless we unite and tell them. Please help us compile a list of thousands. If you would like to look after a couple of maize plants or be sent organic seeds, please contact me on (01751) 417131, or johnclark@gmfreeryedale.org.uk or visit www.gmFreeRyedale.org.uk

Despite the dropping of Chardon, GM free Ryedale are keen to continue the project, because Bayer can still grow T25 maize lines in the UK - they may research and develop Son of Chardon. Chardon is just one of twenty T25 varieties being explored. If GM maize seed varieties are accepted on the Common Catalogue [the European equivalent of the UK National List] they can then be grown throughout Europe, but if the scheme is up and running the consultation process for the growing of GM maize for non-commercial purposes can be tested. It may also be a way to find out where GM maize plantings are taking place.



Boycott Bayer Campaign

To add to Bayer's woes, another campaign has been launched against them. This one takes the form of a boycott. They aim to put up 10,000 'don't buy Bayer' posters outside of doctors surgeries, chemists, vets and garden centres where Bayer products are sold.

You can get hold of some to distribute by e-mailing

media@boycottbayer.com

You can also visit them at www.boycottbayer.com

Bayer Injunction Update

On the 11th February in the High Court in London, Bayer AG were granted an interim injunction against 5 protest groups and 6 individuals. The original conditions that they requested were granted at the preliminary hearing, which established only that there was a case to answer- not that the ruling had been approved by the court. Further requests from Bayer's barristers to extend exclusion zones around Bayer employees at public appearances were refused by the judge on the grounds that they would make protests against the company impossible. A further hearing is due on 5th April.

REPEAT OFFENDERS REMAIN AT LIBERTY

Liz Snook and Rowan Tilly remain an ongoing threat to society after the penal system again shirked from its duties. Despite repeatedly and flatly refusing to pay fines relating to GM tractor obstruction and crop pulling, the Judges at their separate cases saw fit to detain them for 20 minutes and an afternoon respectively, as an alternative to paying their £500 and £750 court costs/fines.

RESOURCES

For regular campaign news and ideas, send an email to majordomo@foe.co.uk with: subscribe gm-action in the text.

For more news and factual info (including the splendid in-depth crunch down, the Weekly Watch) email ngin@icsenglish.com or www.ngin.org.uk www.geneticsaction.org.uk www.biotechimc.org

Also worth checking out is Helena Paul and Ricarda Steinbrecher's - *Hungry Corporations*, by Zed books.

By 26/3/04 3,361 people had signed the Green Gloves pledge (to pull up, or support those who pull up, GM crops if they are ever planted commercially). Sign the pledge on line by going to www.greengloves.com



The lights arent on, and nobodys clone?

Ailing biotech icon PPL Therapeutics, the company which helped clone Dolly the sheep, has announced it is to go into liquidation. There is a last minute buyer which may yet save the firm - but this is by no means certain.

Meanwhile, Human Genome Sciences, which has yet to turn a profit since its inception in 1992 and has seen its stock fall 90 percent from its all-time high, also said it will lay off 200 workers, or 20 percent of its staff.

www.theherald.co.uk/business/6102.html

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