

## Zebelean: Scientists need time to study GE/GMO issue

Contributed by John Zebelean  
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This article relates to what is happening in the Lake County at the present time with genetic engineering (GE) and genetically modified organism (GMO).

What is GE/GMO? GE/GMO is "cloning" of our food utilizing bacteria, viruses, biopolymers, (plastics), DNA genes from other plants, seeds etc. The gene for *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) is used in insecticidal crops and Bt toxin kills beneficial organisms such as bees, ladybugs, lacewings and butterflies through pollen. Bt toxins are also secreted into soil from Bt plant roots and are toxic to earthworms, lepidoptera, and other members of soil fauna (Stotzky, et al. Nature 402, 480 1999).

*Agrobacterium tumefaciens* is a plant pathogen (literally "cancer causing") used to inject genes into plants and viral gene as promoter to make the genes express themselves once in the plant. This is the field of molecular biology.

GE/GMO is still a relatively new technology and not well understood. What is known is only the tip of an iceberg. Dr. Craig Venter, a leader in the Human Genome Research Project, states: "We know nothing about biology." I fully agree with Dr. Venter's statement. We humans, our entire planet's creatures, plants, vegetation, forests, and everything else in our ecosystem will become an endangered species.

There is no indication that this technology will solve world hunger. Instead it is known that genes will contaminate our healthy food — if we could call it healthy food any more — with all contaminants in the atmosphere, water and soil.

In Scotland pollen was carried 10 miles from the mainland and contaminated crops on Ailsa Craig Isle. In other parts of Europe years after they stopped planting GE/GMO crops, their non-GMO crops got contaminated. Once genetic pollution gets into the environment it cannot be called back. This could present a very serious problem for our organic and conventionally grown food and possibly threaten our existence.

In May 2000, Canada shipped unapproved GMO seeds (supposedly by accident) to the United Kingdom and other countries of Europe where many acres of the crop had to be destroyed.

In the USA in 2000, massive contamination of the corn (maize) crop and the human food chain by Starlink, an unapproved variety for human consumption, showed that genetic pollution to non-transgenic crop and food is inevitable. In India, the GE/GMO rice contaminated entire region of wild rice. Wild rice is gone, possibly forever, in that region.

During the 1970s Republican and Democrats, working together, created the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and passed 28 major laws to protect our air, water, endangered species, wetlands, food safety and public lands.

Powerful corporate polluters were finally held accountable but not for long.

In 2001, the White House instructed the EPA's office to stop filing new cases against giant factory farms and others without approval from upper-echelon political appointees in the EPA. We have laws on the books, yet crimes go unpunished.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which is supposed to protect the safety of our food, has betrayed the public and approved GE/GMO without any real scientific study. Furthermore they allowed GE/GMO foods to be secretly used in many foods without the public knowing. All ingredients, vitamins and minerals must be posted on the container. But not GE/GMO. It is inside our food. There are not enough independent studies done to establish if it is safe for human or animal's consumption.

The Lake County Board of Supervisors first voted to ban cultivation of GE/GMO in Lake County, then turned around and formed an advisory committee to advise on what?

We scientists have a serious problem with GE/GMO safety. It is an intruder and a pest in our natural foods that humans have consumed ever since the beginning of time. Advisory committee members are good elements of humanity, but they do not have scientific knowledge of this subject.

I have a suggestion to our politicians. Heaven can wait. This is a complex issue; it is not for you politicians to decide the fate of humanity and our nature. The logic would be to place a 10-year ban on GE/GMO or let the public vote on a 10-year ban, and give a chance to the Union of Concerned Scientists to do their work. Their request was sent to our new administration to investigate FDA behavior. The GE/GMO is clear assault on our food, humanity and Nature.

Source information used: "Crime Against Nature," by Robert Kennedy Jr.; "Pros and Cons," by David Heaf, April 2001, and the Union of Concern Scientists.

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