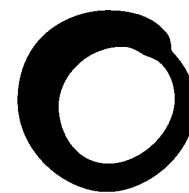


GM-Free Britain

MEDIA FACT SHEET



**Friends of
the Earth**

GM in your area – the bad news

The commercial introduction of Genetically Modified (GM) crops and foods could have widespread impacts on your area.

- The growing of GM crops in your area could affect your local environment and wildlife;
- GM crops are living organisms and, once released they can spread in the environment via insect and air-borne pollen and seeds. Once the GM genie is let loose in your area, it will be extremely difficult to stop;
- Contamination from locally-grown GM crops could affect the sale of crops and food from your area;
- People in your area will eat GM food even though its effects on health are unknown;
- Biotech companies have no legal responsibility to clean up your local environment or compensate people affected in your area if GM food or crops are found to be unsafe.

The public do not want GM food

Recent opinion polls have shown that most people are opposed to GM crops and food. A survey in last month's *Grocer* (20 September) found that 58 per cent would avoid products containing GM ingredients. And an NOP poll for Friends of the Earth, published on the same day, revealed that 63 per cent of people that regularly bought honey wanted it to be GM-free.

GM and non GM crops cannot co-exist.

If GM crops are commercially grown in the UK it will lead to widespread contamination. A recent EU report (May 2002) concluded that if GM crops are grown at the same rate as in the US, the background levels of GM pollen will mean that even farmers who are not growing GM crops might have to label their crops as GM. As organic crops are not allowed to contain GM, organic farmers could lose their organic status.

In September the *Sunday Times* reported that it had discovered GM material in honey from beehives two miles from the nearest GM trial site. In 2000

Friends of the earth discovered a similar incident. Honey producers are advised to keep their hives at least 6 miles from the nearest GM site to avoid contamination. The cost and inconvenience of doing this is borne by the beekeepers. If GM crops are commercialised across the UK avoiding GM crops will be almost impossible.

GM crops threaten the environment

The commercial growing of GM crops is likely to cause environmental, social and economic problems across the UK. But worst affected will be the areas where they are grown.

English Nature, the Government's wildlife adviser said in February 2000 that GM crops could threaten wildlife such as farmland birds. Earlier this year US researchers found that GM crops can pass genes to related plants, making stronger weeds. And, in Canada, GM oilseed rape 'weeds' have appeared that are resistant to three herbicides.

Biotech companies are not liable for GM contamination

EU law on GM crops does not require biotech companies to pay compensation for, or clear up, damage caused by their crops. However, farmers, manufacturers and suppliers of food could be sued for the harm caused by GM food that they have grown or supplied.

Insurance companies have refused to provide liability cover against damage caused by GM crops.

More information is available from Friends of the Earth's publication "*Now or Never: Why you should make your area GM-free*". A version can be found on the web at: www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/now_never.pdf

Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems, which make life better for people.

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- the most extensive environmental network in the world, with almost one million supporters across five continents and over 60 national organisations worldwide**
- a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in over 200 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland**
- dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of its income.**

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