

Scary But True

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The biotechnology industry is making severe changes to our food by transferring genes from one organism to another. Molecular biologists are using bacteria and viruses to insert the genes of other living organisms into the foods we eat. This is genetic engineering (GE). Genetic engineering is an imprecise technology, and the risks of mistakes are huge. Mistakes can cause deformities or cancer in the host organism, which can then be transferred to us. GE foods are being sold in our supermarkets now without labeling.

- The Canadian Federal Health Department admits it cannot adequately assess the growing number of genetically altered foods being developed by industry.
- Monsanto, a leader in the biotechnology industry, has created carcinogens such as Agent Orange, PCBs, dioxin, and Round-Up, and all the while defended their safety. They have been fined for lying, failing to report required health data, toxic waste spills and improper disposal of chemicals. They have also been found liable for employee death.
- Over 50% of all GE crops are herbicide resistant, allowing for more frequent and intensive applications of herbicides. These crops are specifically designed to be resistant to brand-name herbicides in order to secure a market for the chemical manufacturers.
- Crops are being genetically altered to produce their own pesticides, placing more toxins into our food and fields than ever. Recently spruce trees have been developed with produce their own pesticide against spruce budworm.
- Studies show that bugs that eat GE corn may develop a tolerance to its pesticide properties. A significant portion of Canada's corn is genetically altered.
- Soy allergies have increased 50% in the last year, say Europe's leading specialists on food sensitivity. Soy has made its way into the top 10 foods that cause allergic reactions for the first time in 17 years. Since soy is the most common genetically engineered food, this suggests that genetically-modified food could have tangible, harmful impacts on human health.
- Cornell University has recently found that leaves dusted with pollen from genetically modified "Bt maize" (corn) are poisonous and can kill monarch butterflies.
- The National Farmers Union is concerned that wind-blown pollen and seed from genetically-engineered crops will contaminate non-engineered crops.
- New York University research indicates that active Bt toxins genetically-engineered into crops may accumulate in soil. They become bound to clay and humic acid soil particles. These bound

toxins, unlike free toxins, are not degraded by soil microbes, nor do they lose their capacity to kill insects.

- Dr. Arpad Pusztai, a researcher at the Rowett Research Institute in Scotland, announced that rats who were fed GE potatoes showed serious damage to their immune systems, kidneys, spleen, stomach, and brain. Within two days of this announcement, Dr. Pusztai was suspended and forced to retire. At least 20 toxicologists, genetic engineers and medical experts from 13 countries have since found that Dr. Pusztai's conclusions were justified.

- CaMV is in virtually all GE plants currently on the market or being field-tested. CaMV is known to be closely related to human hepatitis B virus and also to retroviruses including HIV and others that cause cancer.

- The top grocery chains in the UK have committed to label or remove all GE foods. Numerous countries have banned the import of GE crops or are legislating labeling.

- In India small farmers are staging hunger strikes and street demonstrations, farmers are burning their GE crops, and citizens around the globe are publicly pulling up GE test plots.

The NBEN is forming a new action group dedicated to genetic engineering issues. For more information, contact the NBEN.