

Consumer Protection: GMO Contamination of Organic Food

Don't Let Obama's USDA Approve Monsanto's RoundUp Ready Alfalfa!

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Global Research, March 02, 2010

[Capitol Advantage](#) 3 March 2010

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#)

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Don’t believe Monsanto’s [greenwashing](#). Genetically modified organisms (GMOs), aren’t meant to [feed the world](#) or be [resilient](#) when there are droughts and floods – they’re designed to [sell pesticides](#), especially Monsanto’s weed killer [RoundUp](#), which the “Roundup Ready” crops, [corn](#), [cotton](#), [soy](#), [canola](#), and now [sugar beets](#) and [alfalfa](#), are genetically engineered to withstand.

A 2009 [study](#) showed that, over the last 13 years, Roundup Ready crops have dramatically increased herbicide use by 383 million pounds!

Before Obama took office, the movement to stop new GMOs was making progress. In 2007, a Federal court [ruled](#) that the Bush USDA’s approval of Roundup Ready alfalfa violated the law because it failed to analyze risks such as the [contamination](#) of conventional and organic alfalfa and the development of “[super-weeds](#).” The court banned the planting of GE alfalfa until USDA completed a rigorous analysis of these impacts. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals twice affirmed the national [ban](#) on Roundup Ready alfalfa planting, but Monsanto is appealing. They’re taking producers of organic alfalfa seed all the way to the [Supreme Court](#)!

Now, OCA’s worst fears – about what would happen if the man who was [Biotech Governor of the Year](#), Obama’s USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, was put in charge of new genetically modified crops – are coming true. Vilsack is trying to get the court-ordered ban on Roundup Ready alfalfa lifted by issuing a new draft [environmental impact statement](#) (EIS). This sets the stage for Obama Administration approval of Roundup Ready alfalfa.

Alfalfa is the fourth most widely grown crop in the U.S. and a key source of dairy forage. The first perennial crop to be genetically engineered, GE alfalfa can regenerate itself from its root-stock. It is open-pollinated by bees, which can cross-pollinate at distances of several miles, spreading the patented, foreign DNA to conventional and organic crops. GMO-contamination of organic alfalfa is inevitable if the Obama Administration successfully commercializes Monsanto’s GM alfalfa.

Consumers who ingest Roundup Ready alfalfa genes are risking their health; according to the EIS, “acute toxicity in mice was observed.”

According to the EIS, consumers who ingest Roundup may experience “general and non-specific signs of toxicity from subchronic and chronic exposure to glyphosate includ[ing] changes in liver weight, blood chemistry (may suggest mild liver toxicity), liver pathology, and weight of the pituitary gland.”

The EIS warns that, “Based on upper estimates of exposure ... infants consuming fruit and all age groups consuming vegetables may be at risk of adverse effects associated with acute exposure to glyphosate residues.”

Consuming milk and meat from animals fed crops that are genetically engineered is also risky. In a survey of milk products sold in stores in Italy, results from the screening of 60 samples of 12 different milk brands demonstrated the presence of GM maize sequences in 15 (25%) and of GM soybean sequences in 7 samples (11.7%).

Consumers are going to want to avoid Roundup Ready alfalfa, but according to the EIS, we don't have that right because, “At the present time, there is no policy regarding the unintended presence of GE material in organic products or food, consistent with the fact that the NOP is a process-based program for certifying a farm or production system as organic, and not a product-based program that tests or certifies individual products as organic.”

We can't let the Obama administration take away our right to GMO-free food. Please send Secretary Vilsack a letter by clicking “GO!” The Obama administration is accepting public comments through March 3, 2010.

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