

Contaminating the Nation's Food: GM Food on the Shelves of Britain's Supermarkets

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From the US to India, the GMO biotech industry appears to have a 'contaminate first then push for regulatory authorisation later' policy. The contamination of our food seems to be a deliberate strategy of the industry [1].

In the UK, there is a multi-pronged approach to try to get GM food onto the nation's plates. The majority of the British public who express a view on GM food do not want it [2]. However, we are experiencing a consistent drive to distort the debate over the GM issue, hijack institutions, co-opt so-called 'public servants' and pass off vested commercial interests as the 'public good' [3].

The GMO industry is mounting a full-fledged assault on Britain via the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs department, the Business, Innovations and Skills department, the Agricultural Biotechnology Council, the Science Media Centre, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Science and Technology in Agriculture, strategically placed scientists with their 'independent' reports and the industry-backed Science Media Centre [4,5,6].

Monsanto and other agritech companies are also lobbying hard for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) [7], which aims to throw Europe's door wide open to GM food imports from the US with unchecked, uncheckable and unlabelled GM food [8]. The same companies are also behind the drive to weaken the pan-European regulatory framework currently in place by attempting to push through legislation that will allow them to pick off each state one by one and force their GMOs onto people [9,10].

The industry, its mouthpieces and proxies are moreover pushing to do away with European process-based regulation [11], which would effectively side-step any effective process for assessing and regulating GMOs.

As if these tactics aren't enough, the contamination of our food with GMOs is occurring right now via imported GM food from the US, which is finding its way onto the shelves of supermarkets, sometimes unlabelled. Even when it is labeled, it may be buried in the small print.

GM food in UK supermarkets

Sean Poulter writing in the Daily Mail (7th November) notes that Marks & Spencer does not use GM in own-label products [12]. However, it now sells products from other brands which contain GM soya or corn. Marks & Spencer had a policy of selling only GM-free food, but the chain is now selling six products containing GM soya or corn despite having long presented itself as being opposed to such engineered products. The six are teriyaki, ginger, and

hibachi sauces from the American TonTon brand and three flavours of Moravian Cookie – sugar, chocolate, and cranberry and orange.

Other stores are also selling an increasing number of imported US foods from brands including Reese, Hershey and Oreo that contain GM ingredients.

Last year, M&S, Tesco, Sainsbury's and the Co-op abandoned pledges to ensure animals supplying milk, eggs, chicken, pork, and beef were not fed a GM diet.

While some food on UK supermarket shelves comes from animals fed on GM crops, without this fact needing to be declared on the label, (the EU imports about 30 million tons a year of GM crops for animal consumption), what we now have are GMOs appearing in various food products.

There was a row last year when it emerged Tesco was stocking American Lucky Charms cereal, which is made from GM corn (declared in small print on the package). The cereal also contains artificial colours that the Food Standards Agency has linked to hyperactivity in young children.

Dr Helen Wallace of GeneWatch says:

“By importing this product, M&S is contributing to the devastating crash in Monarch butterfly populations. Weedkiller on GM soya and maize has destroyed vast swathes of the habitat. Customers are likely to be shocked by this cavalier disregard for the environment.”

Liz O'Neill of GM Freeze states:

“People expect to be able to trust their favourite retailers, who wouldn't put these ingredients in their own brand products.”

The regulations concerning the import and sale of GMOs for human and animal consumption grown outside the EU supposedly involve providing freedom of choice to farmers and consumers. All food (including processed food) or feed which contains greater than 0.9% of approved GMOs must be labelled.

Therefore, in the UK, foods made with GM ingredients need to say so on the label. This is a legal requirement and is one of the main reasons why there is very little GM on the shelves: the GMO biotech sector knows the public would not to buy it.

But what about food production that involved GM enzymes that helped to make the product on the shelf? What about flavourings? What about GM micro-organisms that aided a fermentation process? While the product itself may appear to be non-GMO, genetic engineering may have been involved somewhere along the line.

Taking such matters into account, European legislation requires labelling for certain products and not for others, depending on what was involved during the food manufacturing process – see here: <https://www.food.gov.uk/science/novel/gm/gm-labelling>

As it currently stands, a GMO must be approved by the EU for import as food and feed

before it can be sold in the UK or any other European country. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) does a risk assessment and decides if the GMO is safe. The member countries then vote whether to accept it in food and feed. If no qualified majority is achieved, the Commission makes a final decision.

The EU bureaucracies do not inspire much confidence, however: the conflict-of-interest-ridden EFSA's track record on glyphosate leaves much to be desired [13]; similar conflicts of interests within the European Commission's Scientific Committees [14] seriously compromise consumer safety; the previous European Commission willingly pursued a corporate agenda [15]; and the biotech lobby's massive presence in Brussels is worrying to say the least.

So, given the scenario outlined above, how can people in the UK avoid GMOs on an everyday basis? Here are just a few pointers.

Grow your own food if you have the space.

Do not shop at stores that stock GM products or sell animal products that involved GM feed.

Pressurise stores to stop selling GM items.

Lobby your MPs, MEPs to stop the TTIP and to strengthen European legislation pertaining to GMOs.

The GM Freeze website has a wealth of information concerning who to write to in the UK, how to have an influence, which stores are doing what in terms of GMOs, etc.

Be informed and take action:

<http://www.gmfreeze.org/>

Notes

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- 1] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/genetically-engineered-poison-first-regulate-later-the-criminality-of-the-gmo-biotech-industry/5412810>
- 2] <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2014/02/21/many-britain-remain-sceptical-gm-foods/>
- 3] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/monsanto-syngenta-and-bayer-cropscience-the-gmo-biotech-sector-cant-win-the-scientific-debate-the-options-are-co-option-deception-and-collusion/5381725>
- 4] <http://www.genewatch.org/article.shtml?als%5Bcid%5D=492860&als%5Bitemid%5D=571543>
- 5] <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2581387/Scientists-hidden-links-GM-food-giants-Disturbing-truth-official-report-said-UK-forge-Frankenfoods.html>
- 6] <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/405309/scientists-sale-way-multinationals-039buy039.html>
- 7] <http://corporateeurope.org/pressreleases/2014/07/agribusiness-biggest-lobbyist-eu-us-trade-deal-new-research-reveals>
- 8] <http://corporateeurope.org/trade/2013/05/open-door-gmos-take-action-eu-us-free-trade-agreement>
- 9] <http://www.gmfreeze.org/actions/42/>
- 10] <http://corporateeurope.org/food-and-agriculture/2014/05/biotech-lobbys-fingerprints-over-new-eu-proposal-allow-national-gmo>
- 11] <http://www.gmwatch.org/index.php/news/archive/2014/15722-uk-gmo-lobby-wants-genome-edited-products-to-escape-gmo-regulation-and-labelling>
- 12] <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2826108/Frankenstein-foods-slip-M-S->

[Anger-store-puts-GM-food-shelves-despite-opposed-engineered-products.html](http://www.globalresearch.ca/anger-store-puts-gm-food-shelves-despite-opposed-engineered-products.html)

13] <http://corporateeurope.org/efsa/2013/10/unhappy-meal-european-food-safety-authoritys-independence-problem>

14] http://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/attachments/ceo_-_sanco_sc_-_conflicts_of_interest.pdf

15] http://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/record_captive_commission.pdf

16] <http://corporateeurope.org/international-trade/2014/07/who-lobbies-most-ttip>

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