



Thousands March Against GE in New Zealand Demonstrations link global trade organizations and genetic engineering

Thousands of people marched in Auckland for a GE Free Aotearoa on November 16th. The colorful, diverse crowd was comprised of a wide range of groups including the Green Party, Alliance, MAdGE (Mothers Against Genetic Engineering), animal rights activists, and Eco-Labour party among many others. The march, led by Pukekohe school children went from Aotea Square to Albert Park where people listened to a variety of speakers and were entertained by DJs and musicians such as Golden Horse, Trinity Roots and Stinky Jim.

Auckland was the host to the 8th Pacific Rim Biotechnology Conference, hosted by the New Zealand Biotechnology Association and BIOTENZ. The conference topics focused on business, intellectual property and public perceptions of genetic engineering. Industry speakers included Diatranz, a company conducting xenotransplantation experiments, and AgResearch, a company recently granted permission to continue genetically engineering cows with human genes. A key conference sponsor was Marsh, an insurance company that many believe keeps Huntingdon Life Sciences—the biggest contract vivisection company in Europe—in business.

MAdGE and many other groups working on genetic engineering issues organized a march on the Saturday before the conference to help raise awareness of the conference, and to get the public out and active against genetic engineering once again.



School kids lead the thousands through downtown Auckland on Queen Street to protest genetic engineering calling for a GE-Free New Zealand. Photo: madge.net.nz

Though the turnout was less than the hoped for 20,000, estimates ranged from 5- 10,000. Regardless of the actual numbers, sev-
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Africa Confront s Genetically Engineered Food Aid Moving from oppression to resistance

Raymond K. Bokor

The whole world was shaken and called to consciousness when Zambia's president, Levy Mwananwasa, took the courageous decision to refuse over 28,000 metric tons of genetically modified corn offered as food aid from the United States. This created a new platform for the genetic engineering debate and made Zambia the subject of widespread criticism at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg last summer.

This is not the first time the GE debate has flared in Africa. In December 2000 Algeria banned the importation, distribution, commercialization and the utilization/cultivation of genetically modified foods and raw materials. Egypt has banned the import of GE wheat. The draft Organization of African Unity (OAU) model biosafety law requires that all GMOs, whether classified as food, crops, pharmaceuticals, or commodities, and products thereof must be approved before import, transit, contained

use, or market release. Any GMOs or products thereof must be labeled as such and there is a strict liability regime in place. This draft law is serving as a model for African countries.

The experts and corporations, however, feel that their so-called technology should determine the destiny of Africans without demonstrating to the world that they have ended hunger in their own countries, nor addressed the food safety issues, environmental hazards and threats posed to wildlife and the ecosystem. Hunger in Africa is fundamentally unevenly distributed. Hunger is the result of inequitable economic systems, which deny the poor access to food and land, not merely inadequate supplies of food. The tragedy of the industrial model is that it ignores the social and political dimensions of food production and distribution, and thus leads to environmental degradation as people struggle to alleviate the suffering of famine, disease and poverty. Concentration of power

over food producing resources in just a few hands always has been and still is the main cause of hunger.

Many countries are trapped to accept GE food aid and pressured by the creation of artificial conditions to necessitate their acceptance. For instance Malawi's government was forced by the IMF and World Bank to sell their food reserve for debt repayment so that Malawi would have no choice but to accept GE foods. South Af-

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Greetings

Welcome to the sixth installment of the Regional Update! As the snow piles up here in Vermont we are taking some time to reflect on our work, and the coming of the new year gives us an opportunity to assess our accomplishments and build our vision for the future of the neRAGE Update. You may notice that we are going through some changes around here; as we contemplete the next steps in our work, we are altering the format to fit the expansion of our focus.

When the Regional Update was launched almost two years ago, our intent was to create a forum where organizations and individuals from around the northeast could communicate with each other about their work. While we are holding fast to this commitment, we are finding ourselves drawn to stories coming in from the front lines of the anti-GE movement around the world. The massive opposition to genetic engineering in the global South, as well as ongoing rejection in places like the UK and New Zealand, are inspiring stories that we want to share with our readers. This widening of our lenses has turned the Update into a periodical that is international in scope, and has made this publication a unique recourse for organizing, covering global, regional and local activity.

What this means for the longer term is that we are hoping to develop the Update into a comprehensive periodical. We are working towards expanding our coverage not only of Northeastern North America, but also towards becoming more visible industry watchdog and a clearinghouse of information on GE activism.

The Update continues to be produced at the Institute for Social Ecology's Biotechnology project office in Plainfield, Vermont. As part of our commitment to facilitating communication and networking between farmers, families, environmentalists, global justice activists, fair traders, and so many of you who are concerned about the social, environmental, and human health implications of biotechnology, we will continue to put our time and resources towards building the neRAGE network and the Regional Update. We hope that you too can support this important publication with your subscriptions, donations, submissions, and diffusion of the newsletter. We also ask for your help with our latest challenge: with the broadening lens and scope of our work, we are considering a more fitting title for this publication. Any ideas or suggestions would be welcomed!

If you have title ideas, or any other thoughts or comments about the Update, please feel free to call us at (802) 454.7138 or pop us an email: info@nerage.org

Help Support This Newsletter!

We need **your** help to maintain this newsletter. The neRAGE Regional Update is one of the only publications that covers regional, national, and international activism against the biotechnology industry.

The Regional Updates that we have been producing for the past year reflect the work of more than two dozen different organizations and thousands of people working against the biotechnology industry.

To continue producing this newsletter, we need your support to help cover mailing and duplicating costs. With your contribution, we can continue to connect biotechnology activists all over the continent.

You can also order a booklet on the Vermont Town to Town campaign which describes our campaign and shows you how you can organize your town against GE.

Please send your tax deductible donations to:

- \$5 Town to Town booklet
- \$20 Cover my subscription costs
- \$50 Friend of the newsletter
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- Other My support is going to keep the newsletter going!

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African Food Aid *continued ...*

rica was prepared to accept GE foods provided they are milled so that farmers cannot plant the seeds.

Further, agribusiness makes every effort to sell its inputs or processed foods in the Third World, while using cheap land and labor to produce foods that can be sold at premium prices on international markets. But agribusiness is not alone in its efforts. The groundwork is usually laid by western government aid programs, foundations and international financial institutions such as the World Bank. They provide the infrastructure (roads, electric power etc.) to facilitate exploitation. Such activities are not profitable in themselves, but business cannot operate without them. Thus indigenous people become mere consumers of manufactured goods alien to their local environment.

In 2001, U.S. agencies and African governments and NGOs launched a series of initiatives to use agricultural biotechnology throughout Africa to enhance food safety and security. The initiatives include a regional biotechnology and biosafety program under the USAID Agricultural Biotechnology Support Program (ABSP) to bolster agencies tied to the biotechnology industry in East and Central Africa. It includes biosafety regulatory training in southern Africa, public awareness of biotechnology, development and distribution of livestock vaccines developed from biotechnology, and testing of GE crops in Kenya and South Africa. USAID's strategy has focused on collaborative technology development and training of developing countries' scientists working with the Association to Strengthen Agricultural Research in East & Central Africa (ASARECA) in a collaborative research effort between African, U.S. public and private sectors, international agricultural research centers and other research institutions. The ABSP, managed by Michigan State University, is providing research support to ASARECA to develop and implement the regional program in ten countries. USAID's ABSP has also established a partnership with seven southern African countries to provide technical training. This so-called "partnership in development" serves as a viable ground for implementing and promoting the biotechnology GMO agenda in Africa. Multi-national agro-based corporations have been sponsoring most of the scientists in Africa for their PhDs, and they are frequently used as 'ambassadors' and 'stew-

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Keep Maine Free From Genetically Modified Crops

Leslie Cummins

A grassroots group from Blue Hill, Maine has organized a campaign called "Keep Maine Free from Genetically Engineered Crops". Using whatever forum they can get, they have worked to raise public knowledge above the corporate proponents' claims that these foods are safe. Five years ago, the group called Co-op Voices Unite!, created an affiliation of 28 of Maine's store-front food co-ops and small buying clubs to act as a food watch group and a lobby. The group has promoted lectures and debates on the subject of safety and quality in foods and farming in Maine. Above all they hope to encourage and empower individuals to act.

Co-op Voices Unite! is a volunteer committee of the Blue Hill Co-op and is presently involved with a campaign for a three-year moratorium on growing genetically engineered crops in Maine. The campaign began a year ago by asking 350-400 Maine farmers to sign a voluntary pledge to NOT grow genetically engineered crops in Maine. These pledges will be taken to the 121st Legislature this December to help

pressure the Agricultural Committee to pass into law a moratorium on growing GE in Maine. The bill is sponsored by Rep. Linda Rogers McKee and is endorsed by MOFGA.

The biotechnology corporations spend billions to convince the public that genetically engineered foods are not "substantially equivalent"—the USDA's official language—to regular foods, despite the fact that no institution has done any safety testing for human consumption. From 60% to 70% of processed foods on our grocery shelves have genetically engineered DNA in them. No American corn, the most ubiquitous food in our nation, will be able to claim freedom from genetically engineered contamination whether grown conventionally or organically. Pollen drift will soon ensure contamination. The moratorium bill is designed to help protect Maine farmers from lawsuits against those who have inadvertently been trespassed by GE pollen drift which can result in renegade corn plants; or those who have saved seed for the time-honored farming method for next year's crop. While Maine

does not yet grow much GE crops, farmers across the US have endured much hardship because of court cases against them.

In the words of Dr. Charles Benbrook who spoke at a GE Forum on Nov. 14 in Bangor, "Maine has to make a choice between organic and GE styles of farming. We will not be able to have it both ways." Dr Benbrook who is an economist and consultant for farmers, went on to say that Maine is in a critical position. With the meat and dairy industry in free fall disaster which will take a decade to recover, Maine could choose organic for both meat and dairy industries and build an infrastructure for processing plants. The organic industries have a growth rate of 20%-25% while growth for conventional food industries are only 5%. Maine already has a strong organic niche market established, not to mention that 10% of Maine's milk is now from organic farms.

For more information, see <http://www.keepmainefree.org>

African Food Aid *continued ...*

ards' to defend biotech corporations in their home countries.

Thus scientists at the front lines of Africa's biotechnology revolution are used as a developmental tool, blindfolded as well as aiding in the development of GE foods, believing that their lab work will eventually help develop healthier crops for a continent that has always been a difficult place to farm. For instance Christopher K. Ngichabe, a Kenyan scientist who is the coordinator of ASARECA said, "Biotechnology is a tool, one of many. We're not saying it's a panacea, but it can address some of our problems." Another Kenyan sponsored scientist, Dr Florence Wambugu, vehemently defended GE food against widespread criticism at the sustainable development summit in South Africa last summer. That is the magnitude of the problem. If the intellectuals Africa can boast of as human potential in addressing her developmental needs can be manipulated and become mentally amputated to compromise on the sovereignty of the continent they belong to, then it is a tragedy and very unfortunate.

Shipment of genetically modified food aid to Africa is not in the best interest of a sovereign respect for humanity. We must unite and begin to fight for sovereignty and re-

claim political power for Africa, for the political preconditions of her own freedom. In order to be free in the most profound and general sense, Africans must be free as political beings. Therefore it is necessary to fight the ideology which believes that humans cannot be good, there is no way to find liberation, no way for all humans, particularly in Africa, to be free from misery. The need is to reject political "pragmatism" for a form of utopian thought that addresses both immediate and long-term visions of a free society. By a truly free Africa I mean that nobody, person, or organism can be reduced to private property, no human can be rendered subject, either in part or in entirety, to another person or institution. Zambia's president deserves meritorious praise and acted as a radiance for the rest of the continent's leaders to guide them in making a holistic decision having considered the uncontrollable and unpredictable long-term cumulative consequences of GMOs for the environment, health and the threat to indigenous poor farmers.

In conclusion, I want to say emphatically that if biotech corporations really wanted to feed the hungry, they would encourage land reform, which puts farmers back on the land, and push for wealth redistribution, which allows the poor to buy the food of their choice. The OAU and regional organizations should focus on sustainable food sovereignty and building of local



Food aid being distributed in Zambia. Ironically, the UN was handing out cookies, while the US was demanding that Africa take GE aid. Photo: www.un.org

anti-GMO movements as well as sharing information through regional networks. The debate is not scientific, but political and economic. We desperately need to merge movements and think across divides, understand the basis of eugenics and biotechnology food aid. Finally we need to join forces and break up the power of multinational firms and research centers in Africa so that free citizens in a free society will be enabled to manage their own life through a truly democratic process.

Raymond K. Bokor is an organic agriculture activist from Ghana, currently volunteering with the Institute for Social Ecology's Biotechnology Project.



Continental Supermarket Days of Action

Second North American day of action sees 200 plus events

In late October, organizations and activists across North America participated in the latest round of actions putting pressure on supermarkets to remove genetically modified ingredients from store brand products. The second continental week of actions saw activities from Florida to New Brunswick, Los Angeles to Portland, Oregon. More than 200 events took place- from leafleting to banner hangs, labeling to puppet shows; this was one of the largest groups of coordinated actions to date. The following are summaries and news briefs from some of the events that took place.

VERMONT: On Wednesday, October 30, Vermont activists visited 3 different Shaw's Supermarkets in Williston, Stowe, and Montpelier to educate shoppers about the threat genetic engineering poses to the environment our health, and our ability to control our lives. The Institute for Social Ecology Biotechnology Project organized the actions in affiliation with the GE-Free Markets Coalition (gefreemarkets.org).

Activists from the Burlington area, dressed up in biohazard suits, gathered at a nearby Shaw's in Williston, VT to petition and leaflet customers and demand that Shaw's decontaminate its shelves of GE food. Activists displayed a shopping cart of Shaw's store brand products with labels made to show that these products contain genetically engineered ingredients.

Activists from the Stowe and Morrisville areas brought leaflets and signs to educate shoppers. Later, they met with store management to express their concerns about genetic engineering in their food supply. One organizer said their action was, "a good start and we plan to stick with this campaign."

Montpelier area activists brought signs and leaflets to the Shaw's in Montpelier. The management of this particular store has been particularly unwelcoming to protestors in the past. Store-management has instructed police to issue trespass warnings to people who have entered the store to bring their message to shoppers and managers. Barred from the parking lot, activists offered leaflets to shoppers through their car windows in a series of one or two sentence conversations.

In all 3 demonstrations Shaw's management called for and received significant police presence. Instead of addressing concerns about genetic engineering proactively, Shaw's management is using the police to limit public criticism. Vermont area activists intend to continue demanding that Shaw's remove GE ingredients from their stores.

PORTLAND, OREGON: North West Resistance Against Genetic Engineering staged a wedding between Betty the biotech corn and Safeway grocery stores outside of a local store. Puppets, theater, and a lively demonstration made the action festive and entertaining.

DECATUR, ALABAMA: Two grandmothers participating in an educational action outside of their local Kroger supermarket were arrested for trespassing. "I saw nothing wrong with telling Kroger's shoppers that 60% of the processed food they buy contains genetically engineered ingredients," said Gerry Coffey. "I had no idea Kroger management would have us arrested for telling the truth about their food."

Coffey and her 79 year old accomplice Jean Tune plan to plead not guilty at their hearing and will be going to court some time in January.

WAKEFIELD, RHODE ISLAND: Over 20 people came out to oppose Shaw's genetically engineered food on a gorgeous Sunday afternoon. The event started with a quick shopping trip for Shaw's products known to contain genetically engineered ingredients. Once out of the store, the products were labeled with warning stickers and set up for display on a table. Many cus-



The marriage of Betty the Corn and Safeway the Grocery Conglomerate outside a Safeway store in Portland, OR. Photo: portland.indymedia.org

Wedding Vows for Betty and CEO

"Sadly bewildered, we are gathered here today, in the name of obscene profits and genetic engineering, to join Betty the Biotech corn and Safeway the Grocery Conglomerate in unholy matrimony.

I must admit that I, the FDA, was at first against the idea of this union. I believed that more testing and proof was needed to ensure that joining Betty and Safeway was the right thing to do. But, I was visited by the Bride's father, Monsanto, and his friends and they helped me to see the profitability of this union....

These rings, made of money and forged in secret, are a symbol of your common bond to greed and profit. They are formed in a circle with no beginning and no end just as there is no end to what you will do to increase your bottom lines. Giving each other these rings to each other symbolizes the symbiosis of the Capitalist system where each of you can pass cash to the other while completely ignoring the people you may be harming around you.

Give the ring to Betty and repeat after me. I, Safeway, take thee Betty to be my lawfull wedded product. To stock and to sell, for richer and even richer. In spite of sickness, disease, or other genetic side effects. I promise to provide an ample supply of unwitting consumers, to put profit over people, and to sell, sell, sell from this day forward for as long as your customers may live?

Now Betty, give your ring to Safeway and repeat after me.

I, Betty the Biotech corn, take thee, Safeway, to be my lawfully wedded distributor? To be stocked and sold, for richer and even richer. In spite of sickness, disease, or other genetic side effects. I promise that my creators (We can't really say growers anymore, can we?) will grease palms, mount public disinformation programs and generally fight to block any and all legislation that might possibly protect the public from my potential dangers for as long as the consumers shall live?

By the power vested in me by the Government of the United States, I now pronounce you Distributor and Product. You may kiss the bride.

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What We Can Learn From Oaxaca, Mexico

S'ra DeSantis

In spring 2002, the Mexican government reported that 8% of the indigenous corn they tested in Oaxaca (a southern state in Mexico) contained DNA from genetically modified corn. Mexico prohibited the cultivation of genetically engineered corn in 1998 to preserve over 5,000 distinct indigenous varieties that exist in southern and central Mexico. Unfortunately, Mexico never banned the importation of GE corn. In 2001, Mexico imported 6.2 million tons of corn from the United States; approximately 30-40% of this corn was genetically engineered.

The imported corn has cross-pollinated with native corn causing the indigenous varieties to become contaminated. The consequences of this contamination are horrific. The introduction of DNA from genetically altered material into indigenous corn could cause the native corn to lose its ability to produce and reproduce in its natural environment, destabilizing the economic livelihood of the small-scale farmers. The 8% contamination rate in Oaxaca should be used as an indicator. Oaxaca is a rural state and it is illegal to plant GE corn there. GE pollution rates in more densely populated regions have not yet been assessed, but most likely the rate would increase significantly. The contamination rates will only

continue to rise in countries where it is legal to grow GE corn, like the United States.

In the United States, approximately 26% of corn cultivated last year was genetically modified. Tests must be conducted in this country to determine contamination rates of the four commercially available GE crops (corn, soy, canola, and cotton). Open-pollinated crops, such as corn and canola, can be contaminated through cross-pollination. All crops can become polluted when seed lots are mixed together (since no labeling or separation is required in this country).

In the U.S., there is no law requiring farmers to notify neighbors or local authorities if they cultivate genetically engineered crops, so knowing the exact amount of GE corn grown in our region is impossible to determine. Here in Vermont, we know that the main GE crop is Roundup Ready corn, which is genetically engineered to be tolerant to the broad-spectrum herbicide Roundup manufactured by Monsanto. However some farms have stated that they cultivate Bt corn, which contains a toxin from *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), a naturally occurring soil bacterium that inhibits the digestion process in many insects. Bt corn targets the European corn borer, but also kills and adversely affects other insects like lacewings, monarch but-

terflies, and bumblebees.

If Roundup Ready or Bt corn cross-pollinates with organic corn (either sweet corn or animal feed) and this is detected, organic farmers would be forced to sell their corn on the conventional market and could potentially lose their organic certification. Multinational corporations like Monsanto should be held liable for the economic losses farmers face from cross-pollination of GE corn. This responsibility should not lie on any farmers, organic or conventional. However, Monsanto has sued farmers whose crops have been contaminated with DNA from patented GE crops through cross pollination. Since corporations maintain patents on GE crops, anyone who grows them without permission—whether intentionally or not—can be held liable and ordered to pay tens of thousands of dollars to corporations. These are the dangers that farmers in the northeast face today. Local farmers must use the grave example of Oaxaca, Mexico to demand that their crops be protected from the intrusion of GE technology.

For more information, please see the complete article at www.neRAGE.org

Update From Florida's Safe Foods Campaign

Jason Boehk

Some of the Florida Alliance for Safe Foods' best organizers spent the months of July through November managing political campaigns for local progressive candidates. This important work took time and energy from FASF's biotech campaigns.

However, it was a great learning experience, and we feel that new friendships, alliances, and skills emerged from the political work, which FASF hopes to build upon in the near future.

FASF's most successful action this year took place on June 8th, as part of the GE-Free Markets Coalition's National Day of Action. More than 40 people participated in this rally and leaflet action, which took place in front of one of Publix's larger area stores. FASF called upon Publix to remove GE ingredients from its own brand products.

The local ABC-TV affiliate broadcast a brief report about the FASF Publix action on the evening news that night.

To date, in spite of repeated requests, Publix executives have refused to meet

with FASF to discuss Publix's GE food problem, even though FASF have submitted more than 1100 signatures on petitions.

FASF had a smaller yet successful Publix leaflet action on November 2nd. We handed out leaflets for an hour at a Publix store's front doors, until we were asked to leave by the manager. Several shoppers voiced their support for our efforts and said they would speak to Publix about GE foods. We finished up by holding our large 8 x 10 foot Publix banner along the busy road in front of Publix for 45 minutes. The property manager—no connection to Publix—apparently had a problem with the concept that we were now on PUBLICLY-owned land and exercising our free-speech rights. As always, we held our ground. Many passers-by gave us thumbs-up and honked in support.

FASF also participated in the GE-Free Markets Coalition national Call-in Day on Nov. 25th. We continue to receive reports from people who called Publix to register their complaints about the experimental, unne-

cessary GE ingredients Publix uses in its products. Our Publix campaign will only continue to get bigger and stronger. Also since June, FASF has conducted outreach and tabling activities, including speaking to groups about GE foods.

FASF is in the process of reviewing options for the Publix and biotech education campaigns for 2003. In collaboration with a local health care practitioner, we have tentatively scheduled a series of educational fora about public health - including the problem of GE foods - to begin in early 2003.

Additionally, we are seeking funds to purchase digital video equipment so that we can produce our own media. We would like to recruit more supporters from throughout Florida and the Southeast in order to increase pressure on Publix to do the right thing.

You can find out more about FASF at their website: www.protectororganic.org



Maine Biotech Forum Engineered to Support GE

Sharon Tisher

"Biotechnology: Bane or Boon?" was the topic of the day-long forum hosted by the Maine Department of Agriculture.

Speakers from Washington, D.C., included Margaret Jones, a biotechnologist with the Agricultural Biotechnology, Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the USDA, and Leonard Cole, of the EPA Bio-Pesticides and Pollution Prevention Division. Both outlined their respective agencies' responsibility for biotech regulation, under the "Coordinated Framework" established in 1986, which determined that biotech plant and animal products would be regulated like any other plants and animals, with no new statutory requirements.

Leonard Cole outlined the EPA's regulatory perspective on "PIPs" or "Plant Incorporated Protectants," which genetically incorporate EPA-registered pesticides such as *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) into plants, hence bringing them under EPA jurisdiction under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). Cole's PowerPoint slide called them "Plant Incorporated Pesticides," but the term "pesticides," Cole cautiously noted, "is no longer used." The remainder of his presentation was similarly designed to put the most innocuous face on this technology.

Cole acknowledged that various risks are associated with the technology, including "toxicity, allergenic proteins, superweeds from pollen spread, insect resistance, antibiotic resistance, and effects on endangered species," but argued that all of these were well controlled by the current regulatory system. "The ongoing StarLink corn redemption continues," Cole acknowledged, and "how it got into the food system nobody knows."

Cole concluded by arguing that wider adoption of biotechnology would benefit human health by reducing the use of chemical pesticides: "We have some sound scientists out there, doing all they can to reduce the burden of pesticides that are causing cancer in children, and breast cancer."

"Our Assistant Administrator," Cole observed [Stephen Johnson, Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances], is "100% behind biotechnology." Some in the audience expressed dismay at this attitude toward a regulated industry by the principal federal regulator in charge of environmental protection.

When queried whether the EPA had ap-

proved the use of the pesticides that were causing cancer in children, and why, then, the public should trust them in vouching for the safety of GE crops, Cole responded that under the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996, new protections exist for children's food supply.

Dr. Michael Vayda, University of Maine professor of Biochemistry, gave the audience a basic lesson in DNA and the technology of genetic engineering. Vayda maintained that the potential benefits had to be weighed against the potential risks. When a member of the audience queried, "Whose benefits, and whose risks?" Vayda responded: "Yours. The consumer will decide. It's your values as a public. If the people are morally outraged, it won't be implemented."

Vayda's comments prompted many audience questions about the refusal of the federal government to require labeling of genetically engineered food. How can the consumer exercise her right to choose or not to choose the technology, without a label? Vayda conceded that there was a "consumer's right to know," and stated that he was not opposed to labeling, but argued that a simple "GMO free" label was not informative enough to be useful to a consumer.

Leonard Gianessi of the National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy, and Charles Benbrook of Benbrook Consulting Services, former Executive Director of the Board of Agriculture of the National Academy of Sciences spoke in the afternoon session.

Gianessi led with a well-polished PowerPoint show vaunting the economic advantages to farmers of GE crops. A member of the audience asked Gianessi why his data were so much more optimistic than the May 2002 USDA report, released in August, which concluded that most of the basic economic claims of GE crops were "false or suspect." [see: "The Adoption of Bioengineered Crops," www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aer810] Gianessi didn't question that characterization of the USDA report, but said that the USDA database was four years old, and Gianessi apparently drew much of his data directly from farmers rather than from USDA figures.

"If biotech crops were as safe, effective, and profitable as [Gianessi] has said, we would not be here," began Charles Benbrook. "We may be the most technologically advanced country and the last remaining super power, but when it comes to this technology," Benbrook argued, "we can't see

the forest for the trees." Benbrook addressed the larger economic perspective on the choice to adopt or not to adopt these crops, and its relationship to alternative approaches to agriculture. Maine, Benbrook advised, is "one of the few states where there is an option to make the decision [not to plant GMOs]...where the presence and role of GMOs is so modest that it would not take much if the consensus was to take a different route."

Benbrook has done a number of recent analyses of USDA data, determining that many of the claimed economic benefits of GE crops are not born out by the data [see: www.biotech-info.net].

"You have to make a choice. It will be very difficult to have it both ways."

Benbrook urged Maine to weigh the claimed benefits of GE crops carefully against the very real potential impact on organic agriculture. The organic dairy, meat, and poultry sectors are, Benbrook noted, one of the "major growth areas of agriculture" and are likely to take off even more, as "conventional meat and dairy production is in crisis, in a free fall, and the [food safety] problems are so systemic that it will take a decade or two before it gets any better." Organic corn is the number one feed for organic dairy and livestock, and corn farmers get a 15% to 25% premium for organic feeds. A growth in organic dairy and livestock could create a new processing infrastructure in Maine, with new jobs. All of this is threatened, Benbrook argued, by the potential of contamination of organic corn crops by GE corn: "It's probably inevitable that GMO growth will be at the expense of the organic sector, and vice versa. You have to make a choice. It will be very difficult to have it both ways."

In a question from the audience, Benbrook was asked to comment on the claims that biotechnology was a reliable and predictable technology. Benbrook replied that he "reads the technological scientific debate as close to unanimous that there's more risk of gene instability in GMO crops than conventional crops."

For a complete report on the forum, see www.mofga.org



Oregon's Measure 27 Goes "Back to Committee"

Jeff Peckman

Oregon's historic statewide Measure 27 to label genetically engineered food was a grand success even though the voters sent it "back to committee." It received 371,851 votes or 29.54% of the votes. Two of the most populated counties which are also heavily Democrat, Multnomah (Portland) and Lane (Eugene), had 40.36% (96,690 yes votes) and 36.52% (44,806 yes votes) respectively. The results were good for the first time on the ballot—considering that the two other initiatives got fewer votes. Nearly all school bonds were defeated despite budget cuts in those schools.

Media coverage in Oregon and in national and even international news outlets was extraordinary for Measure 27. It produced over 100 articles, letters to the editors, and guest commentaries, in addition to dozens of radio and TV interviews, forums and debates throughout the state. Even after the election at least another dozen articles mentioned how the Measure's opponents spent over \$5.4 million to defeat the measure and one article said the global food industry "breathed a sigh of relief" that Measure 27 did not pass.

During the campaign, dozens of advocacy organizations, Chambers of Commerce and politicians, declared their support or opposition. School classes went deeply into the issue and two academic reports were published, one of which debunked the exaggerated costs claimed by the opposition. Campaign contributions for Measure 27 funded 266,000 four-page

tabloids and 30,000 "door hangers" being distributed by 150 volunteers as well as TV and radio ads including Sir Paul McCartney's kind endorsement. Additionally, 1.8 millions voters were mailed a Voters' Pamphlet by the Secretary of State that included powerful arguments from 23 endorsing organizations and individuals.

Why was the Measure rejected? The personal comments of Oregon voters indicate that Oregonians did not vote against labeling of GE foods as much as vote against an uncertain cost impact and an initiative that many felt should be better written. They also frequently viewed national labeling as preferable, which of course it is—if Congress would only pass it. It is common for lawmakers to send a draft law back to a committee for further refinements. That is primarily the result of the election and in this case, the voters were the lawmakers.

What's next? To continue the momentum and apply the lessons from Measure 27, activists should identify progressive politicians who will introduce bills and resolutions on issues related to genetic engineering. This should be done quickly in preparation for upcoming legislative sessions. This will support efforts for a national labeling program and future ballot initiatives. Now that a corporate-controlled party has commandeered all branches of the government, we can't expect much from Washington D.C. However, we can expect a great deal from citizen lawmakers and voters. In 2002 over \$5 billion worth of ballot measures were approved by voters for conservation purposes.

What else can you do? Consider doing a local ballot initiative. Read "Citizen Lawmakers—The Ballot Initiative Revolution" by David Schmidt and pay special attention to the chapter "Ballots Against Bombs" which highlights the national grassroots campaign against nuclear weapons that took place in the early 80's. The book also includes a campaign manual to help get started with a ballot initiative locally. Activists can make great strides with this powerful tool because it engages voters in the discussion of key issues like nothing else does. According to David Schmidt, "The late George Gallup, Sr., after more than 50 years in the public opinion polling business, said in 1984; 'The judgement of the American people is extraordinarily sound. The public is always ahead of its leaders.'"

Measure 27 was one of the most watched ballot initiatives in America and the international media coverage has allowed more the world's population to know that Americans have not "embraced" biotechnology in food and that we are battling the same U.S. corporations they are. All those who have worked towards responsible legislation on genetically engineered food for so many years can be very proud of the success in Oregon. The ground was extremely fertile and over time, a bumper crop of successful legislation and ballot initiatives will restore safety and integrity to our food supply.

For more information, see www.voteyeson27.com for a complete archive of news materials and more.

Pharmaceutical Corn Contamination *continued ...*

about the unnamed ProdiGene crops almost contaminating the food supply, Bio subsequently reversed their pledge.

What is perhaps the most disturbing part of this particular incarnation of the biotechnology horror story is once again the direct link to the US government. The idea of a revolving door between the biotech industry and the government is nothing new— from Clinton's personal attorney (Mickey Kantor, who served on Monstanto's board and as a US trade representative for much of the Uruguay WTO negotiations) to Donald Rumsfeld (CEO of Searle, which became Monstanto's pharmaceutical division). The example of ProdiGene reveals the same old story. Anthony G. Laos, president and chief executive of ProdiGene, Inc. was appointed

by President George W. Bush to serve on the Board for International Food and Agriculture Development— and advisory board to USAID.

With the US trying to force genetically engineered grains into Africa by offering GE grains as food aid, one can not help but speculate on the influence that the biotechnology industry can muster with its direct relationships to the US policy making apparatus. Zambia, in particular, has continued to resist US pressure to accept GE aid, dodging headlines in the US press claiming that the African governments would rather see their people go hungry than eat GE food. Recently, the US announced that it would offer countries in Africa non-GE food aid, though surely this reversal of its policy is much to the biotechnology industry's chagrin.

The most recent chapter in the ProdiGene story is that the USDA, in charge of monitoring and regulating GE, will be tightening its own regulations on pharmaceutical crop trials. They have fined ProdiGene a token \$250,000, in addition to the charge for destroying 500,000 bushels of contaminated corn. Though ProdiGene speculates that the total costs may rise into the millions, they remain optimistic: "We are pleased to put recent allegations behind us, and are optimistic about the future of bio-pharmaceuticals and their regulation," reads the press release on their website. "The future of bio-pharmaceuticals has simply never been brighter."

And brighter indeed it will be, though for whom and at what cost remains hidden deep within the industry's public relations campaigns.

This is a compilation of articles posted on www.neRAGE.org

Supermarket Day of Action

continued ...

tomers came up to the table asking for information about why the products were on display.

The assistant store manager eventually asked us to leave, but not before we heard him say he had concerns about the safety of genetically engineered food. After moving the table down to a sidewalk near the entrance of the store, volunteers with the local Clean Water Action chapter at University of Rhode Island put on Go GMO Free t-shirts and relayed chants in opposition to GE foods. Other Safe Foods Campaign volunteers visiting from Worcester wore biohazard suits and held signs saying Mothers Against Genetically Engineered Food. The event was featured on the local 11 o'clock ABC news.

EAST PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND: On October 30, shortly after 11am, a banner dropped from the roof of Shaw's in East Providence, kicking off a long day of opposition to genetically engineered food across New England. Reading Stop Genetically Engineered Food: No Ghost Ingredients, the banner drew lots of attention from Shaw's customers and other East Providence residents before it was removed 25 minutes later.

Inside the store, Shaw's customers pulled genetically engineered Shaw's brand products off the shelves and piled them into carts which were then herded to the dairy section in the back of the store. Once in place, the carts were locked together and wrapped in CAUTION tape. Concerned shoppers then passed out leaflets to other Shaw's customers and explained the reason for the product lock-down. Outside the store, a rally be-

gan near the store entrance where hundreds of leaflets were passed out to shoppers and other East Providence residents.

BANGOR, MAINE: Saturday November 2 "Hey hey! Ho ho! GMOs have got to go!" chanted activists outside of Shaw's in Bangor. Despite a cold breeze and a wind chill of 10-20 degrees, a grim reaper, an ear of corn, and 3 decontamination experts joined 9 civilians carrying signs and a banner outside the Main Street Shaw's at noon. They also prevented Monsanto's mad scientist from shooting his M-82 gene gun while a contingent from Ellsworth visited the interior of the store to hand out leaflets explaining the issues surrounding the genetically engineered ingredients in Shaw's brand foods.

The Bangor Police Department's hospitality was limited to the permit that was acquired for the demonstration. As soon as the permit time had expired, Shaw's was very insistent that the demonstrators leave.

CANADA: Actions took place all across Canada, including Lacombe, Alberta, Peterborough, Ottawa, Gatineau, Quebec,

Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, and Fredericton, New Brunswick.

In Kitchener Waterloo, activists entered a new Zehrs store and placed warning labels on products. One person was arrested as a result of the management being very unhappy with this public service.

FREDERICTON, NB, the North Side Voluntary Labelling Committee labelled a local Superstore while their South Side counterparts did the same across town. They would like to remind everyone that voluntary labeling is a suitable activity for anyone, anywhere, anytime!

This story was compiled from groups reporting back on the day of action.



Outside the Shaw's in Williston, Vermont, the message continues to be communicated- unlabeled, untested, and unwanted. Photo: Kevin Davis

Growing A GE-Free Northeast Conference Report

Doyle Canning

From November 1st to 3rd, 2002 activists from around the northeast region gathered at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts for *Growing a GE Free Northeast: Education, Strategy, and Action Against Genetic Engineering*. Friday evening's keynote speakers included renowned author Barry Commoner; Chaia Heller and Brian Tokar of the Institute for Social Ecology; Theresa Podell of the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society; Wisconsin dairy farmer John Kinsman; and entertainment by David Rovics, the Liberty Cabbage Theatre Revival, and others. Over 150 people came to Hampshire to hear the stories of the Midwestern dairy farmers' struggle against rBGH, the fight to stop the intro-

duction of GE wheat in the northern plains, the eugenic roots of the discourse of biotechnology, and the potential for emerging from this madness by building a sustained movement for a democratic and ecological future.

Saturday brought farmers, citizens, and environmental activists together to learn about the scientific, economic, and agricultural impacts of biotechnologies, as well as to discuss future regional strategies for opposing genetic engineering. Participatory strategy discussions focused on the supermarkets campaign, now targeting Shaw's/StarMarket; the expansion of the town-to-town campaign throughout the region; legislation; student activism; and farmer-to-farmer alliance building. The day concluded with a large group

strategy session, on weaving these existing campaigns together to create a coherent web of resistance and grow a GE free northeast.

Many thanks go to the organizational sponsors of the conference and Hampshire College, the Pioneer Valley locals who volunteered with housing and help throughout season and the weekend, as well as the fantastic chefs from the Liberty Cabbage collective and the participants who traveled from as far away as Maine and New Jersey! Recordings of the highlights of the conference are available from the ISE Biotechnology Project (courtesy of Free Radio Burlington) for a small donation of \$10. If you are interested in a CD, please contact us at (802) 454.7138 or info@nerage.org

Thousands March in New Zealand *continued...*

eral thousand people marched together against genetic engineering down Queen Street, which ended with a rally and speeches in Albert Park.

Jane Kelsey, Professor of Law at Auckland University and member of Action, Research and Education Network of Aotearoa (ARENA), addressed the crowd, linking genetic engineering issues to the World Trade Organization (WTO) which had been meeting in neighboring Australia the same week:

"No to GE means No to the World Trade Organization! That was a key message of the protests against the WTO in Sydney... although the media seemed determined to keep the actual issues off the front page.

Why is the WTO important? Because its global rules can lead to heavy punishments on governments who dare to introduce GE-free laws, to impose bans on GE imports, to require labeling of GM foods, refuse patenting of life forms, to guarantee indigenous control.

This is not about 'trade' in the old fashioned sense. The WTO imposes rules on patents, investment, agriculture, services, environmental regulation, and more.

That's why agribusinesses, drug companies, biotech companies and other transnationals are so keen to get even tighter agreements at the WTO, and similar 'free trade' agreements between countries, like the one with the US that our government seems prepared to go to war to secure.

They want WTO rules so that companies like Monsanto can grow what they want, where they want and sell it anywhere in the world.

They want WTO rules that allow those companies to corner the world market on producing seeds, to force farmers to use GE seeds and to sell their crops only through the TNC's [Trans National Corporations] own distribution chains.

They want WTO rules that force farmers to use terminator seeds and allow them to sue farmers who keep seeds to regenerate for themselves, while leaving the risk with the farmers when those crops fail or they can't find markets for GM crops.

They want WTO rules that legitimize biopiracy by companies that patent indigenous knowledge, remedies and seeds.

They want WTO rules that guarantee the unfettered right to invest, whether in land or privatized producer boards like Fonterra or Crown research institutes, anywhere in the world

They want WTO rules that will let them control the world's entire food chain. To quote a senior executive from Monsanto: what you are seeing is not just a consolidation of seed companies, it's really a consolidation of the entire food chain. Since water is as central to food production as seed is, and without water life is not possible, Monsanto is now trying to establish its control over water.

They are already well down this path. The WTO has already begun striking down any environmental, health or social regulations they deem 'disguised barriers to trade'."

Of course, the WTO is not alone in linking pro-trade agreements and genetic engineering. The World Bank, the International Monetary fund, the US Fast Track Negotiation Authority, the impending Free Trade Area of the Americas all are tying trade and genetic engineering together. But in New Zealand, where last year 3,000 pledged to pull plants from GE test sites, there is a real movement for building a GE-free zone which could be di-



In the streets, thousands march toward Albert park in opposition to the Pacific Rim Biotechnology Conference. Photo: www.indymedia.org.nz

rectly at odds with WTO policy.

The following day, registration for the biotech conference began with a loud presence from activists. Around 50 people showed up with noise makers of various descriptions to make the registrations as noisy and as difficult as possible. Police had put barricades all around the front entrance, and tape around the car park. There were four police wagons in the car park, along with various other marked and unmarked police cars. Although all sides of the hotel were targeted, police quickly used the nearby construction site as justification to move activists out of "safety" concerns. During dinner, protesters returned in an attempt to disrupt the wining and dining going on inside. Participants inside the conference moved away from the windows as the noise kicked back up.

On Monday activists arrived at 8am for the opening ceremonies of the conference. Around 40 animal rights, anti-vivisection, and anti-GE protesters made an incredible amount of noise, while being kept away from the arriving public buses by the police. After this a group of activists made their way down to the Marsh offices, a sponsor of the conference, and the insurance company of Huntingdon Life Science, the notorious animal research firm based in the UK. With a police escort the whole way to the building, a group of activists made it up the elevator to the 18th floor of the NZI building, to tell Marsh what they think of them, while the rest of the protesters sat outside telling the public why they were there, and making a heck of a racket.

Throughout the rest of the conference, similar events took place, including an early morning fare well to the delegates outside their hotels at 6:30 in the morning.

Despite the difficulty in sustaining large numbers through out the demonstrations, the events were a massive success, showing once again that genetic engineering has no place in New Zealand.

This report was compiled from reports on www.indymedia.org.nz and www.madge.net.nz



Pharmaceutical Corn Contaminates Food Supply

ProdiGene corn may contain AIDS vaccine components or other unknown compounds



Greenpeace dropped a banner on the silo containing the pharma-corn.. Photo: Greenpeace USA

What became clear from the Starlink corn episode in the fall of 2000 was that GE products deemed unfit for human consumption could not be kept out of the food supply. The startling revelations in November that corn, genetically engineered for pharmaceutical uses, had made it far beyond the field, into a local grain elevator, and almost into the food supply has left everybody who deals with GE a bit sweaty.

ProdiGene, which calls itself the "leader in transgenic plants," contracted with farmers in Nebraska to grow its genetically engineered crops last year. One of the farmers who grew the pharma-corn, grew soy beans this year, but failed to remove the volunteer corn plants coming up between the rows. These pharmaceutical corn plants made their way along with the harvested soybeans into a local grain elevator. It wasn't until a chance inspector saw the evidence of the volunteer

corn plants that we saw any public attention to pharmaceutical crops being grown in the very same fields as food crops.

Of course, this wasn't the first time this has happened. Sequent investigations uncovered an earlier incident in September, in which an Iowa corn crop was burned by the USDA after it was found to have cross-pollinated with pharma-corn grown on the same plot the previous year. Which begs serious questions about the level of contamination from pharmaceutical crops and the number of times incidents such as this one haven't been caught.

The further irony of the ProdiGene mess is that just a month before, the Biotechnology Industry Organization drafted a pledge that they would no longer plant pharmaceutical crops in proximity to food crops of the same variety. Despite all of the news

continued on page 7

Town to Town Campaign Sweeps Across Vermont

More than 35 groups and individuals have committed to doing the grassroots work necessary to pass additional anti-GE resolutions across Vermont.

People are gathering signatures from registered voters in their towns, in order to get resolutions warned by selectboards for Town Meeting Day in March 2003.

These resolutions call for labeling of GE ingredients in food products and many call for a moratorium on the growing of GE crops in Vermont.

Earlier this year, neRAGE reported on the 28 towns that passed similar resolutions in the state, along with one by select board, and five towns in western Massachusetts. This year everyone involved in working on this campaign feel confident that the number will double. Word from other states suggests that this campaign maybe quickly spreading.

Another aspect to the campaign, which is crucial in Vermont, is reaching out to

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the agriculture community; educating organic and conventional farmers alike about the dangers GE crops pose to the traditional small farm landscape of the state.

The Town to Town Campaign is still looking for volunteers to pass resolutions in more towns across the state--the more communities we have, the more impact we

can make both locally and state-wide. To get involved, please contact the Institute for Social Ecology Biotechnology Project at 802-454-7138, or Bayard Littlefield at the Vermont Genetic Engineering Action Network-802-223-0770 or vtgean@sover.net