



Potato Picnic

It's not too late to stop GM spuds

Join us for a walk to see the trial site and a protest picnic - bring something you'd like to plant!

Bring costumes, families, footwear and clothing for a country stroll and your favourite potato-based dish.

Starting from
 Girton Parish Church
 Girton, Cambs
 12 Noon
 Sunday
 July 1st

for more info go to www.mutatoes.org

What's going on?
 The government has allowed the German Chemical company BASF to run two years of trials of Genetically Modified (GM) potatoes at the National Institute for Agricultural Botany (NIAB), just Northwest of Cambridge.

Why have they been modified?
 The potatoes have been engineered to be resistant to Late Blight, a fungal disease which causes them to rot in the ground. However, it's not necessary to use genetic engineering to achieve this, 20% of the potato varieties already grown in the UK have been made resistant to blight through normal selective breeding.

Are they wanted?
 The British public has consistently rejected GM crops from both our fields and our plates.

What's wrong with GM?
 GM is a totally new way of creating living organisms by taking a gene out of one species, like a fish, and putting it into another totally different species, like a tomato. It's an imprecise and unpredictable technique which often affects the modified plants in unexpected ways. Sometimes they start to produce new toxins, or fail unexpectedly.

Once GM pollen is released into the environment it cannot be contained. In America, where GM is grown on a large scale, GM pollen is so widespread that most farmers have no choice but to grow GM. Those that don't risk having to pay royalties for 'intellectual property rights' when their crops accidentally become contaminated. Growing GM in Cambridgeshire threatens the livelihoods of organic farmers who will lose their Soil Association standard if they become

contaminated. No company will give insurance against the risks associated with GM and the Country Landowners Association believes that growing GM affects land prices negatively. Beekeepers are also threatened through the possible contamination of their honey.

Genetic modification will also cause an increase in animal tests.

How have other countries responded to BASF's GM trials?
 Both the Netherlands and Ireland stopped BASF trialing these potatoes this year because of environmental safety concerns.

Is it Safe?
 There has been very little research into the food safety of GM. One of the few experiments that has been conducted - by Dr Arpad Pusztai in 1999 - produced alarming results. His study involved feeding GM potatoes to rats and his findings suggested that the modified varieties damaged the rodents' immune systems and growth rates.

Is there anything we can do?
 The good news is that GM is one of the few issues where the government and big business have had to pay attention to public opinion. Due to the actions of ordinary people, Britain has been almost completely GM free for over 2 years - indeed, following a strong local campaign, national rally and direct action BASF has decided not to plant a parallel site in Hull this year.

On Sunday the 1st July, people from all over the country will be coming to Cambridge to tell BASF & NIAB that GM crops are not wanted here. If you are concerned about this issue, or simply want to know more, please join us.

