



For Immediate Release: 17 August 2011

Conflict of Interest and GM Regulation – What’s happened to our food?

MADGE has put out a new leaflet providing information about GM food, its safety and regulation.

Stand out lines:

“The companies that own the GM patents can, and do, restrict independent testing.”

“Our food regulator, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), does no testing. It does not commission any studies. It relies on the studies provided by the companies that own the GM crops. FSANZ does not require the companies to do animal feeding trials. “

“A review looking at Conflict of Interest has found that where at least one of the researchers was connected to the GM industry, 100% of peer reviewed studies made a favourable GM safety finding (Diels 2011).”

“The latest review of GM safety studies noted their limited number, that most reporting favourable findings had been conducted by the GM companies, and that the debate remains undecided at all levels. (Domingo 2010)”

“There is no official monitoring of GM food safety in Australia. FSANZ expects the GM companies to monitor for “existing and emerging risks” and report back to FSANZ. “

“GM food was first introduced in 1996. No studies have been done on the effects of introducing it into the food chain. “

The leaflet can be accessed online at <http://bit.ly/pnp7cO> References are at <http://bit.ly/mZ62KX>

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Text:

Your food looks, tastes and smells the same but it’s been changed in ways you can’t see. This may have harmful effects on people, especially children:

What’s happened to our food?

Companies have Genetically Modified (GM) some food crops:

Soy, corn, canola, cotton (we eat cottonseed oil) and sugarbeet. Ingredients from these crops end up in many processed foods and are used in animal feed.

GM plants have been changed in two main ways so they can

- **survive being sprayed with weedkiller** (herbicide tolerant). This greatly increases the use of weedkillers.
- **kill certain insects that eat them** (insect resistant). The GM toxins produced in the plants can't be washed off

What effect could these GM foods have on our health?

Animal feeding trials of GM foods report many negative effects. They include increase in inflammation, allergy, immune dysregulation, infertility; changes to the liver, kidney, pancreas and spleen.

How has this food been tested and regulated?

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Is GM food labelled?

Rarely. Our labelling legislation is full of loopholes and the GM companies have worked hard to ensure it stays that way. The Australian Food and Grocery Council noted that **if all GM derived ingredients had to be labelled most food products would need a label.**

Who are the GM companies?

One company, Monsanto, is estimated to own 90% of the world's GM crops. Other companies are Du Pont, Bayer, Dow, Syngenta and BASF. These companies also sell pesticides and pharmaceuticals. They began buying seed companies in the 1990s, are still acquiring them and now dominate the world seed market.

Monsanto bought 19.9% of WA's ex-public plant breeding company InterGrain in 2010. They plan to introduce GM wheat into Australia.

Reasons to be concerned about eating GM food

The American Academy of Environmental Medicine asked doctors to educate the public to avoid GM foods due to the “serious health risk in the areas of toxicology, allergy and immune function, reproductive health, and metabolic, physiologic and genetic health”.

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What can I do?

1) Ring food companies and ask them to source GM free ingredients.

If they say they only use ingredients approved by FSANZ or with no GM DNA or protein, it may mean they use ingredients derived from GM plants or processes. **Ask them to use only GM free ingredients.**

Ask them to source eggs, meat, milk, cheese fish and honey from animals fed GM free feed.

Shop carefully, buy from trusted companies and farmers, buy organic.

2) Contact politicians to ask for:

- Full labelling of any ingredient derived from a GM crop or process
- A regulation system based only on human health
- **A freeze on GM approvals and an independent review of GM ingredients currently in our food.**

What's the alternative to GM crops?

GM breeding is very recent. GM crops have been linked to superweeds, plant pests and diseases, pesticide related illnesses and birth defects in GM growing areas.

Working with natural systems (agroecological agriculture) has doubled yields in Africa. Food availability increases when there is adequate storage, transport and reduced food waste. **We need farming systems that protect the land and farmers and produce healthy food for everyone.**

References: <http://www.madge.org.au/Docs/madge-leaflet-Aug2011-refs.pdf>

August 2011