



# National Organic Coalition

[www.NationalOrganicCoalition.org](http://www.NationalOrganicCoalition.org)

## NOC NEWS

February 17, 2011

**See News below about many organic topics:**

[GE Alfalfa Update](#)

[Support CFS Fight Against GE Alfalfa](#)

[GE Sugar Beets](#)

[GE Ethanol Corn](#)

[GE Salmon](#)

[Save the Date - Pre-NOSB Meeting](#)

[How to Contact Your Government Officials](#)



### **\*\* ACTION ALERT \*\***

**USDA has approved Genetically Engineered Alfalfa and GE Sugar Beets**

**KEEP UP THE Calls and Emails to President Obama**

**Tell him: "NO GE ALFALFA! -- NO GE SUGAR BEETS! Reverse USDA's Decisions"**

**President Obama Comment line: (202) 456-1111**

**Email: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>**

Prior to any De-regulation of new GE crops, A [GMO Contamination Prevention Plan](#) must be developed. At a minimum the following 7 points must be addressed transparently and fairly for all stakeholders:

1. Establish a USDA Public Breeds Institute to ensure that the public has access to high quality non-GMO breeds and germplasm.
2. Create a *Contamination Compensation Fund* [see NOC's Draft proposal at: <http://www.nationalorganiccoalition.org/GEAlfalfa/ProposedCompensationPlan.pdf>] , funded by GMO patent holders, to provide immediate assistance to persons contaminated by GMOs, from seed to table.
3. Complete elimination of deregulated GM crop status, including prior deregulations, with on-going oversight and public evaluation of compliance and enforcement.
4. Conduct comprehensive, independent, longitudinal studies on the health, environmental, and socio-economic impacts of GMOs, prior to GM crop approvals.
5. Prohibit the growing of promiscuous GM crops that are likely to cause GMO contamination.
6. Prevent food security risks associated with the concentration of our food system in the hands of a few companies.
7. Institute an immediate labeling protocol for all GM crops, products, and ingredients.

**For More details, see:**

**[GMO Contamination Prevention and Market Fairness - What Will It Take?](#)**

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**Please support the Center for Food Safety's Ongoing Legal Efforts to  
STOP GE Alfalfa & GE Sugar Beets**

Their legal work has been at the forefront of this fight, and is the reason that USDA had to admit the health and environment impacts from GE crops.

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*Adapted from Center for Food Safety*

**USDA APPROVES GE SUGAR BEETS*****Allows continued growing of controversial, illegally planted GE Sugar Beets  
In defiance of earlier court ruling***

On February 4 the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) issued a new decision to allow the U.S. sugar beet industry to continue growing Monsanto's "Roundup Ready," genetically engineered (GE) sugar beets. In 2010, A federal district judge found that growing the GE sugar beets is likely to cause irreparable harm to people and the environment, and "may cross-pollinate with non-genetically engineered sugar beets and related Swiss chard and table beets," and ordered the federal government to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as required by the National Environmental Policy Act before allowing the GE sugar beets to be grown.

In spite of that court order, the federal agency today issued a far less comprehensive Environmental Assessment, claiming it adequately considers the damage the GE sugar beets are likely to cause. According to APHIS, Roundup Ready sugar beets can be partially deregulated without having a significant effect on the environment. This conclusion is at sharp odds with earlier court rulings and the views of growers of organic and non-GE crops, who will likely see their crops contaminated by the GE sugar beets, threatening their livelihoods and the ability of farmers and consumers to choose non-GE foods.

The decision will be immediately challenged in court by a coalition of farmers and conservation groups: the Center for Food Safety, Organic Seed Alliance, High Mowing Organic Seeds, and the Sierra Club. This is the same coalition that previously sued and won.

For more information, see the Press Release from Center for Food Safety:

<http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/2011/02/04/farmers-and-conservationists-challenge-latest-federal-approval-of-genetically-engineered-sugar-beets/>

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*Adapted from Center for Food Safety*

**World's First GE Biofuels Corn Approved by USDA**

Washington, D.C. - February 11, 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved the world's first genetically engineered (GE) crop designed specifically for biofuel production. " This GE "biofuels corn" will contaminate food-grade corn, and has not been properly assessed for potential adverse effects on human health, the environment or farmers' livelihoods."

The GE corn - known as Event 3272 - is genetically engineered to contain high levels of a heat-resistant and acid-tolerant enzyme derived from exotic, marine microorganisms. The enzyme breaks down starches into sugars, the first step in conversion of corn to ethanol, and has not been adequately assessed for its potential to cause allergies, a key concern with new biotech crops. Leading food allergists indicated that Syngenta's assessment of the potential allergenicity of this enzyme was inadequate, and Agronomists suggest that unharvested corn will deposit large quantities of this enzyme in the soil, which could adversely affect soil carbon cycling. At present, ethanol plants add a different and familiar version of this enzyme to accomplish the same purpose. The corn was developed by Syngenta.

USDA acknowledges that serious concerns about food system contamination remain, yet deregulated the GE corn anyway, citing a Syngenta-led "advisory council" and so-called "closed-loop" system for amylase corn. Syngenta's capacity for and commitment to stewardship are called into question by past mishaps.

From 2001 to 2004, the company accidentally sold seed of an unapproved GE corn variety (Bt10) to American farmers, a variety which contained an antibiotic-resistance marker gene for resistance to ampicillin, an important human antibiotic, presenting the risk of exacerbating the serious medical problem of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

The National Organic Coalition agrees with the analysis by CFS that "it is irresponsible to engineer corn for fuel use at a time when massive diversion of corn to ethanol has played a significant role in raising food prices and thus exacerbating world hunger. Leading food experts have blamed excessive conversion of corn to ethanol for exacerbating the world food crisis by driving up prices of corn and other staples. The World Bank reported an 83% rise in food prices from 2005 to 2008, and estimates that 100 million additional people have been pushed into hunger and poverty as a result. USDA data show that 23% of US corn (3 billion bushels) was converted to ethanol in 2007, jumping to over 30% (3.7 billion bushels) in 2008, with further increases expected as more ethanol refineries are constructed."

For more information and to read the CFS Press Release:

<http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/2011/02/11/worlds-first-genetically-engineered-biofuels-corn-threatens-contamination-of-food-grade-corn/>

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## GE Salmon

FDA is expected to approve the GE AquAdvantage Atlantic salmon - *the first genetically engineered animal meant for human consumption* - any day now. This, despite over 400,000 comments from individuals, fishers, organizations, and food companies opposing the introduction of GE salmon, as well as scientific analyses from U.S. Department of Interior's Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) questioning

AquaBounty's science and safety claims (see <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/pressreleases/troubling-emails-reveal-federal-scientists-fear-fda-approval-of-genetically-engineered-seafood/stop-frankenfish/salmon>).

There have been virtually no comprehensive studies about the health, environmental and economic impacts of GE Salmon - the FDA must require a Full Environmental Impact Statement showing that they are safe for consumers, native salmon populations and the environment. The FDA has allowed the company to conduct three of the four studies on whether the product is safe for human consumption. AquaBounty's scientists have been criticized widely for using only six GE salmon to determine the potential for allergies.

### **ACTIONS:**

\*\* As we go to press, There is an attempt to zero out funding for FDA to approve GE salmon (or any product derived from GE Salmon) in the 2011 Budget Continuing Resolution. This amendment would offer a much needed freeze on FDA's approval process, temporarily halting FDA's dangerous actions while fishers, consumers and members of Congress address the numerous human health, environmental and economic risks associated with GE fish. See Center for Food Safety for up-to-date information and Action:

<https://secure3.convio.net/cfs/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=361>

\*\* Bills in both the House (Representatives Young, R-AK; DeFazio, D-OR; Jones, R-NC; Polis, D-CO; Stark, D-CA; and Wu, D-OR) and Senate (Senators Begich, D-AK; Murkowski, R-AK; and Murray, D-WA) were recently introduced to ban genetically-engineered salmon. 30 House members and 14 senators sent a letter last September to the FDA questioning the review process and the safety of a genetically-engineered animal for human consumption. There is also a bill requiring labeling, should such fish get approved, which is co-sponsored by Murray and Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon.

### **Ask Your Representative and Senators to Co-sponsor the Bill to Ban GE Salmon**

For more information and an Action Alert, go to :

[http://action.foodandwaterwatch.org/p/dia/action/public?action\\_KEY=5888](http://action.foodandwaterwatch.org/p/dia/action/public?action_KEY=5888)

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**Save the Date!**

# You're Invited to NOC pre-NOSB Meeting

**Monday, April 25, 2011 -- 10 am to 5 pm**

**Seattle, Washington**

**Hotel: Red Lion on 5th , 1415 Fifth Avenue, Seattle, WA 98101**

**Phone: 1-206-971-8000**

**USDA has secured a block of rooms @ \$139.00 per night from Sunday through Friday nights. Register as attending USDA Conference.**

[NOSB meeting April 26 - 29. See details at NOP website](#)

Highlights of the NOC pre-NOSB meeting will include:

- Farm Bill
- GE Alfalfa
- NOSB Issues
- Aquaculture and GE Salmon

**Coffee/Drinks & Snacks included - LUNCH is on your own**

**Please RSVP to Liana Hoodes via email at: [Liana@NationalOrganicCoalition.org](mailto:Liana@NationalOrganicCoalition.org)**

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## **How to Contact Your Government Officials**

How to contact the President:

President Barack Obama's Comment line: **202-456-1111**

Fax the White House: **202-456-2461**

Use the contact form on their webpage - <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>

## **How to contact Agriculture Committee Members**

Use NOC's Listing of the [House and Senate Agriculture Committee Contact Information](#)

<http://www.nationalorganiccoalition.org/TakeAction/112CongressAgricultureCommittee.pdf>

If you are unsure of who your Representative is, use these websites to find out:

<http://www.congress.org/stickers/?dir=congressorg&officials=officials&lvl=C>

<http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml>

For Your Senator, Call the Capitol Switchboard **202-224-3121** and ask to be directly connected to your Senator's office.

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