

Protect organic crops from contamination by genetically engineered crops

Mike Johanns, Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary of Agriculture Johanns,

I am writing to ask your agency to do more to protect the public from the risks of genetically engineered foods. Specifically, the USDA should impose a moratorium on open-field growing of genetically engineered corn. On April 19, 2006, the USDA issued a report titled "The First Decade of Genetically Engineered Crops in the United States." Astonishingly, this report completely ignores the problem of contamination of organic crops from cross-pollination by genetically engineered crops.

I find this omission outrageous since your agency knows it has been very well documented that organic corn IS being contaminated by transgenic varieties. In its report "Gone to Seed," the Union of Concerned Scientists says that genetically engineered DNA is contaminating most of the crop seeds in the United States. This contamination seriously threatens organic crops, which by definition are produced without genetic engineering.

Americans are flocking to organic food in record numbers. Organic food represents one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. food industry - sustaining an astonishing 20 percent annual growth rate for more than a decade. It states quite clearly in the USDA organic standard that genetically engineered foods are NOT organic. A huge number of Americans are choosing organic foods because we believe they are a healthy choice for our families, and more beneficial for the environment. After all this brilliant success, it would be a great tragedy to see the purity of organic foods destroyed by genetic contamination.

The USDA has acted irresponsibly by allowing genetically engineered crops to be grown with little concern about how they may be harming organic agriculture. Evidence indicates that corn pollen can blow for several miles and that buffer zones are not adequate to prevent pollen drift. All this, not to mention the fact that there have never been ANY human safety tests conducted to prove that genetically engineered crops and foods are safe for human consumption. Indeed, a growing number of studies indicate that genetically altered crops may pose serious health and environmental risks.

I therefore call upon you, as one of the key guardians of the safety of the food supply for this country, to demand that the USDA place an immediate moratorium on the open growing of genetically engineered crops and restrict them to greenhouses or similar controlled environments.

Please write me back and tell me what you plan to do to address this issue of genetic contamination of organic crops in the United States before it grows into a national scandal. Thank you.

Sincerely,

_____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

_____ (address)

_____ (city, state, zip)