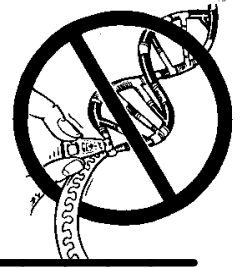




Friends of the Earth

Sustainable Food and Agriculture Project



FoE Australia Policy Statement on Genetically Modified Foods

The FoE (Fitzroy) Genetix Campaign aims to raise critical debate and conduct campaigns focused on the ecological and socio-economic consequences associated with the use of genetic engineering and other new biotechnologies in the areas of agriculture and food production.

The FoE policy is one of complete opposition to the genetic manipulation of plants, animals and microorganisms for the purposes of food and fibre production. There are two main reasons for this policy of complete opposition:

(i) The new types of ecological and human health risks and problems associated with this new ability to directly manipulate and transfer genetic material. These include:

- the dangers and uncertainties associated with the radically new ability to transfer genes across all species boundaries;
- the problems associated with the transfer of modified genes to other non-modified crops and weeds;
- the introduction of new toxins into the environment and of new toxins and allergens into food products;
- the ecological and health risks associated with introducing antibiotic-resistant genes and viral genes into crops.

(ii) The intensification and exacerbation of already existing ecological, health and socio-economic problems and inequalities associated with the way the new technologies are being used to extend and accelerate the current practices and dynamics of chemical-industrial agriculture. These include:

- the maintenance and extension of chemical-intensive and monocultural farming practices, and the chemical pollution, soil degradation, high water consumption, mechanisation and loss of biodiversity associated with these practices;
- the continued exploitation and suffering of animals in the production of food, fibre and medicines;
- the continued squeezing-out of small-scale and subsistence farmers by large-scale capital-intensive producers, contributing to food insecurity, poverty and hunger in Third World communities;
- the extension of the ownership and control of the entire industrial food system by a small number of transnational seed, chemical and food corporations.

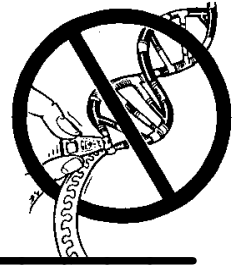
The FoE Campaign does not only focus on potential or unpredictable risks, but more importantly on the way the new biotechnologies have and will contribute to maintaining and extending ecologically unsustainable and socially inequitable practices and structures of food production, distribution and consumption. FoE also emphasises the ways the new technologies are being used to further undermine the food security and autonomy of traditional, peasant, local and small-scale producers and communities in the Third World.

Aside from these fundamental concerns, these new biotechnologies are simply not required to deal with the ecological problems and socio-economic inequalities associated with the existing industrial food system. Solutions and alternatives exist in the form of more sustainable organic and traditional agricultural practices, and structural changes in access to land, seeds, employment and in trade policies. Regardless of the merits of any particular application of the new biotechnologies, overall these new technologies are strongly tied to the



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existing chemical-industrial paradigm of agricultural production which facilitates the further intensification of ecological degradation, widespread poverty and malnutrition, and corporate control and consolidation of the food system. For these reasons we maintain a policy of complete opposition to the use of genetic engineering and other new biotechnologies in agriculture and food production.

FoE also has serious concerns with the particular ways in which genetically engineered organisms (GEOs) are being developed, regulated and commercialised in Australia and elsewhere, including:

- the severe limitations in scientists' understanding of the genetic structure of plants and animals;
- the clear need for caution and extensive research and testing, which is being over-ridden by the rush to commercialise new products;
- the lack of government regulation of research, testing and commercialisation of GEOs;
- the resistance of governments and industry to the full labelling of all GEOs.

For these reasons FoE supports the following policy proposals:

- a Five Year Freeze or Moratorium on the commercialisation of all GEOs;
- the full and comprehensive labelling of all GM foods;
- the creation of a comprehensive government regulatory regime.

FoE also actively supports ecologically sustainable and socially equitable alternatives to GEOs and the dominant structures and practices of the chemical-industrial food system, including:

- organic and traditional farming practices;
- local production to meet local food needs;
- seed saving practices and networks;
- creating stronger links between farmers and food consumers;
- methods and organizations of food distribution and consumption which reduce the processing and packaging of foods;
- the co-operative ownership and control of food production, distribution and retailing where possible.