



## **AAFC consultation on low-level presence of non authorized genetically modified organisms in Canadian imports: The drop that makes the cup run over**

Agriculture and Agrifood Canada is consulting stakeholders of the agricultural sector for establishing a tolerance policy towards the low level presence (LLP) of non authorized GMOs in Canada in imported grain, seed, food and feed. If this policy is adopted, Canadians would unconsciously eat food that contains GMOs non authorized in Canada but authorized in one other country or GM food being on the Canadian list of GMOs already in the approval process.

Given the rapid pace of development of all kind of GMOs all over the world, from corn with high level of lysine to goat producing silk thread from mammary glands, AAFC alleges that non authorized GMOs will be found more and more frequently in imported shipments and that it is necessary to avoid complications that would impede the import-export market. Why ship back to the exporting country a corn shipment containing a very small percentage of non authorized GMOs in the importing country?

Canada is an important producer, even a leader in the production of GM crops.

But the consultation on LLP hides a deeper trend in the agricultural world: GMOs are expected to develop exponentially. The list of GMOs awaiting approval is getting longer; moreover, a built GMO is composed of stacked genes to implement simultaneously multiples traits to the modified plant. GM versions of tomato, potato, sugar beet, grain, fish, pork, goat could soon appear in consumers 'plate. But is it what consumers are looking for? Is genetic manipulation desirable at that scale?

Some of the GMOs effects are known. Weeds that GM crops growers are trying to fight react to the massive use of Roundup Ready by activating their own gene responsible for the duplication of the enzyme that the RR inhibits. We now call them superweeds and they are very difficult to eradicate.

We also know that modified genes transfer from the mother-plant to the child-plant, that being not so surprising, but we also observe the horizontal transfer of modified traits, that is the transfer from one plant to microorganisms (such as bacteria, fungi). It causes concern when you know that experimental GM crops are buried in the soil where millions of microorganisms are living. We also observe the transfer of GM traits to wild varieties

(such as canola in Canada). Biotechnology advocates alleges that these are unique events but avoid shouting from the roof tops that an isolated event can become dominant. We periodically see the propagation of fungi or bacteria introduced by unsuspected food imports that cause devastating damages in the host country. It all started with a small lode of microorganisms.

The other disturbing concern about the development of GM crops is that those crops cannot be contained; once grown, they spread outside of the fields where they were sown through pollination, wind, insects and water. Organic crop producers are harmed; it is not anymore possible to grow organic canola in Saskatchewan. Organic producers have to test, adopt measures to prevent the contamination by GM crops and suffer financial losses when they lose their organic status because of the undesirable GMOs present in their harvest.

The growing use of pesticide is to be added to the list of problems incurred by the cultivation of GM crops; knowing that their GM crop is resistant to pesticides, GM crop producers spread RR more than generously on their land to fight weeds. It accounts for the creation of superweeds and for continuous agrochemical pollution of the Canadian land.

The list of concerns linked to GM proliferation also includes loss of biodiversity, monopolization of the intellectual property of GM seeds in the hands of biotechnology companies, the unknown middle and long term effect of the consumption of GM food by humans.

This being said, the fact that AAFC wishes to establish an LLP policy for non authorized GMOs demonstrates how it is impossible to control the genetic flow of GMOs in shipments; this lack of control of the genetic flow is just as present in environment, in plant and microorganism cells and, ultimately, in the animal and human organisms.

The real debate about LLP is then: what kind of agriculture do we want? What will be the proportion of GM food in the plate of our children? Why are consumers put aside about those issues relating directly to the food that they eat and to their health? It rather seems to be a LLP of real debates about those crucial issues.

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