



## TRUE FOOD NOW!

The True Food Network is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that supports organic, local, and sustainable food systems. We are currently seeking individuals who are passionate about food, health, and the environment. For more information, please visit our website at [www.truefoodnow.org](http://www.truefoodnow.org).

### Want better oversight of GE Crops? Now's your chance!

Dear reader,



In the coming months of the Bush Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released a proposal to completely overhaul its regulation of genetically engineered crops.

significantly weakening its oversight. The proposed rule would virtually ensure that contamination of organic and conventional crops will become even more frequent, and even encourage the Agency from taking any action to remedy such contamination. The rule would continue to allow the dangerous practice of producing drugs and industrial chemicals in food crops grown in the open environment, and it leaves consumers and the biotechnology industry to decide whether their GE crops are regulated at all.

Over four years ago, USDA promised stricter oversight of genetically engineered crops; unfortunately, improvements considered early on have been voided and the regulations have instead become weaker. The proposed rule now has even more gaping holes than the regulations it is replacing, and creates a few new ones as well, resulting in more public exposure to untested and unlabeled genetically engineered foods. Instead of tightening controls to protect the public and the environment from contamination and harm, what USDA has offered further endangers your right to choose the foods you and your family eat and farmers' right to their chosen livelihoods.

To make matters worse, USDA published the rules before publishing the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as required by law, and in the absence of public review of the data needed to make regulatory recommendations. Clearly, there is something wrong with this picture. We are calling on the Obama Administration to reject the irresponsible Bush "anything goes" biotech policy, and to put in place rules that will create real change in the regulation and oversight of GE crops. And we are requesting a moratorium on commercial planting of any new GE crops until such comprehensive regulations are in place.

The comment period has been extended to June 25, 2009. Please send your comment to USDA today - the Agency is listening, let's demand better oversight of GE crops to protect citizens, farmers, wildlife, and the environment!



Send a letter to the following decision maker(s):

Decision No. APHIS-2008-0023  
 Below is the sample letter:  
 Subject: Docket No. APHIS-2008-0023  
 Dear [decision maker name automatically inserted here],  
 Docket No. APHIS-2008-0023  
 Regulatory Analysis and Development  
 R03, APHIS, Station 3A-838  
 4700 River Road Unit 110  
 Riverdale, MD 20727-1228.

Re: Docket No. APHIS-2008-0023, Department of Agriculture Movement, and release into the environment of Certain Genetically Engineered Organisms.

I am very concerned about the risks posed by genetically engineered crops—especially those crops engineered to withstand repeated applications of herbicides and crops that produce drugs and industrial chemicals. They threaten human health, organic and conventional family farmers, wildlife, and the environment. I urge USDA to withdraw the proposed rules, or make substantive changes such as those presented below; publish the full Environmental Impact Statement; and suspend all new GE crop approvals in the interim.

The proposed rules do little to close the loopholes in the current regulations, and instead create more gaps than they fill. For example:

As currently proposed, the rules allow biotech companies to self-assess the safety of their own experimental GE crops to determine whether USDA should even regulate them. The proposed criteria are open-ended, subjective, and would substantially reduce USDA's oversight of a wide range of GE crops. Most egregiously, it is not genetic engineering that triggers regulation under the rule; the developer would make that initial decision. This is a clear abdication of regulatory responsibility. USDA must make genetic engineering the trigger for oversight. USDA must also use sound science to address the risks posed by GE crops rather than merely denouncing them as perceptions of marketing issues.

The proposed rule would also allow companies to grow some GE crops with no oversight whatsoever. Under the proposed "seed system," US law could eliminate entire categories of GE crops or varieties with which they have "liability," despite the USDA's acknowledgment that doing so would "increase gene flow between GE and non-GE crops." The policy virtually ensures that contamination episodes will become more frequent. USDA must eliminate "non-regulated" status and implement commercial planting instead that allows USDA to monitor these new crops after commercialization. To add insult to injury, USDA has proposed a "Low Level Presence" policy in the law which excuses it from taking any action to remove experimental GE crop material from conventional or organic food, feed, and seed. Experience shows that such contamination often causes severe economic harm to farmers, and could threaten the environment as well. USDA must eliminate the Low Level Presence policy.

USDA has also refused to propose any controls on pesticide-producing GE crops, despite documented increases in pesticide use associated with herbicide-tolerant crop systems and an epidemic of resistant weeds they have fostered. APHIS should use its resources and authority to regulate such crop systems, and more generally to regulate GE crops for their threat to public health, the environment and farming communities. APHIS seems to be unwilling to raise at Congress through its failure to fully implement the provisions enacted in the 2008 Farm Bill which mandated increased protections against contamination events that have cost American farmers billions of dollars in lost profits and markets.

Despite repeated assurances that pharmaceutical and industrial GE crops would be subjected to increased monitoring, reporting, oversight, and management, USDA rejected scientifically sound options that would have banned outdoor cultivation of GE pharmaceutical and chemical-producing crops. This is the only way to ensure that untested drugs and industrial chemicals don't end up in our food and environment. USDA must ban the outdoor cultivation of any and all plants engineered to produce drugs and industrial chemicals, and the production of ANY such food crops (indoor and outdoor).

Finally, the rule includes language that bans state or local regulation of GE crops that are more protective than its own weak rules. I strongly oppose such preemptive language that would bar local or state

#### Instructions:

Click [here](#) to take action on this issue or choose the "Reply to Sender" option on your email program.

#### Tell-A-Friend:

Please add the web address below to tell your friends about this. USDA is only accepting comments through June 25th, and it is crucial that we get our voices heard!

#### Tell-A-Friend:

What's At Stake:

#### Campaign Expiration Date:

June 25, 2009