

Why Conventional Dairy Farmers Oppose the Cultivation of GMO Crops in Vermont

1. **The "coexistence" of genetically engineered (GE) crops and non-GE crops is not possible because of genetic drift. Cross-pollination threatens our neighboring family farms.**

Vermont Secretary of Agriculture, Steve Kerr, believes that there can be a "coexistence" between GE crops and non-GE crops. Unfortunately this is impossible due to cross-pollination. One of the most daunting consequences of genetic engineering is genetic contamination. Genetically engineered crops can be classified as a "living pollution" because they can reproduce themselves. Once a GE crop exists in the environment, its pollen can be passed on, causing contamination in other plants from the same species. These newly contaminated plants can then reproduce the pollution, and so on.

2. **The pure image that Vermont products have on the market is undermined by Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).**

Vermont products maintain a competitive edge on the market because they are believed to be pure and natural. GMOs threaten to contaminate this image. If we can make Vermont crops GMO-free, we fill a much desired niche in the market for GMO free foods. Farmers should have the ability to promise that their products are GMO-free, and they cannot do that if their neighbors are growing these crops.

3. **The cultivation of GE crops will create insects and weeds that have a higher resistance to insecticides and herbicides, which will be more difficult to control in the long run.**

Scientists throughout the world have assessed that target pests will become resistant to insecticide producing crops like Bt because not all insects will die from eating the Bt crops. Some of these survivors will evolve to become resistant instead. Farmers who cultivate Roundup Ready crops can spray as much glyphosate as they desire and their resistant crops will not die, only the weeds around them will die, unless they also build up a resistance to Roundup. This resistance has only increased the amount of herbicides being used in agriculture and stronger herbicides are then required to kill weeds that develop herbicide tolerance. A recent report from the Northwest Science and Environmental Policy Center discovered that, "herbicide tolerant crops have increased pesticide use an estimated 70 million pounds over the last eight years," and cautions, "The efficacy of herbicide tolerant technology is now seriously threatened by weed shifts and resistance. Herbicide use and costs are bound to rise for the foreseeable future."

4. **GE foods have not been proven safe for human consumption.**

The risks of genetically engineered foods have not yet been assessed. Genetically engineered foods can create new food allergies or transfer food allergies from one food to another as genes from one species (a potential allergen) are placed into another, without labeling the transfer. Genes from Brazil nuts were introduced into soybeans, supposedly to improve the nutritional content of the soybeans. Some people have fatal reactions to Brazil nuts. Blood samples from people with Brazil nut allergies demonstrated an allergic reaction in the presence of these GE soybeans, so luckily these soybeans were recalled before they entered the market. But what if they had reached the market? In 1990, 27 people died and 1,500 became ill from L-tryptophan, a genetically engineered dietary supplement. StarLink corn, a type of Bt corn that was intended only for animal feed because human digestive systems cannot recognize a protein inside the corn, accidentally entered the human food supply due to cross-pollination and the mixing of seed lots. The USDA found 22% of the grain they tested to be contaminated with StarLink. Hundreds of people reported allergic reactions from StarLink to the FDA. Allergic reactions ranged from stomachaches to anaphylactic shock.

5. **We do not want to further the corporate consolidation of our family farms and food.**

Multinational corporations, like Monsanto, Cargill and ADM, already control much of our food supply. Now corporations are allowed to patent our seeds. Intellectual property rights granted to seed manufacturers threaten farmers' ability to save seed legally. Farmers cultivating any crop that contains patented genes from Monsanto who have not signed a contract with the corporation could risk legal action by Monsanto even if the farmer does not know her/his crop contains GMO material. Percy Schmeiser, a farmer from Saskatchewan, Canada, had his canola fields contaminated when his canola cross-pollinated with his neighbor's GMO canola. Monsanto sued Schmeiser for \$125,000 for illegally growing its patented variety of GMO canola without a license (called "patent infringement"), even though Schmeiser never intended to nor wanted to cultivate Monsanto canola. Hundreds of farmers throughout the US and Canada have been sued or threatened by Monsanto and have settled out of court.