



DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

CORPORATE STANCE: MORATORIUM ON PLANTING GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

We support a moratorium on the planting of genetically modified/engineered* crops pending environmental and human safety studies. Until such time as this technology is proven safe, all foods containing genetically engineered ingredients should be labeled. *June 2004*

**Plant and animal foods that are “created” by (1) splicing genes from one species into the DNA of a totally different species, or (2) removing specific genes from a plant/animal for a desired effect, also called “gene-editing” or (3) altering genes so they can be resistant to a specific chemical/herbicide (most widely used is Roundup, a trade name for glyphosate). This is done to produce certain qualities not intrinsic to the plant itself. The process for transferring genes is not a precise technology. There is no simple one-to-one relationship between the function of a gene and how it acts in the genetic structure of the organism or how it interacts in a totally new environment. Scientists do not know the long-term ramifications for altering the genetic structure of plants/animals, or how the new species will interact with the environment or affect humans. Once a new form of life has been introduced into the world, it cannot be recalled.*

EXPERIENCE:

The FDA has most recently approved the sale of the first genetically modified animal, a fast-growing salmon, in spite of the lack of studies re short/long-term environmental and health concerns. These salmon have the potential to dominate native, natural species, impairing their ability to survive.

In addition to the Arctic Apple (its flesh won't turn brown) and five varieties of potatoes already on sale, other gene-edited foods are expected to begin selling soon. Researchers are currently pursuing editing genes in wheat, mushrooms, tomatoes, corn, rice, pigs, dairy cows with the said purpose being to enhance certain qualities or remove undesirable traits. However, most of the gene-editing research has gone into making plants herbicide resistant.

Glyphosate (main ingredient in Roundup) is the most commonly used herbicide in the U.S., with more than 250 million pounds used on American farmland each year. It is sprayed on genetically modified crops who are impervious to its poison as it kills all other plants growing in the field. Neither the chemical, nor its effects, are included in any government testing. In 2015 it was classified as “probably carcinogenic to humans” by the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

ANALYSIS:

No safe field trials or long-term testing has been done on any of the genetically engineered or gene-edited food.

More than 42,000 lawsuits have been filed against Monsanto (developer of Roundup) claiming glyphosate played a role in causing non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. Three cases have already been decided that glyphosate did the cause the plaintiffs’ cancer, and Monsanto has been ordered to pay tens of millions of dollars in damages.

Roundup is banned in fourteen countries (with more taking steps to do so) as well as in a growing number of U.S. communities, counties, and school districts. More groups are focusing on state-wide efforts to ban the herbicide.

Recent tests by EWG (Environmental Working Group) reveal very high levels of glyphosate in foods like cereal, granola bars and instant oatmeal.

Despite its links to cancer, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) continues to rank glyphosate as safe, as does the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), who plans to continue allowing its sale. Glyphosate is the main ingredient in Roundup,

Genetically modified crops have also initiated the mass propagation of mono-cropping, which is one of the largest contributors to climate change.

REFLECTION:

It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected. Not even atoms or subatomic particles can be considered in isolation... so too living species are part of a network which we will never fully explore or understand. A good part of our genetic code is shared by many living beings, it follows that the fragmentation of knowledge and the isolation of bits of information can actually become a form of ignorance, unless they are integrated into a broader vision of reality. (138)

A broad, responsible scientific and social debate needs to take place, one capable of considering all the available information ...Discussions are needed in which all those directly or indirectly affected (farmers, consumers, civil authorities, scientists, seed producers, people living near fumigated fields, and others) can make known their problems and concerns, and have adequate and reliable information in order to make decisions for the common good, present and future. (135)

Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home, Pope Francis

ACTION:

1. Make known your concerns about the lack of appropriate study and regulation, biased research, and the fast-tracking of genetically modified plants and animals to legislators, federal authorities, and seed and food corporations.
2. Contact your local grocery stores and ask them not to sell genetically engineered salmon. Read food labels carefully. Most processed food contains genetically modified products unless stated otherwise.
3. Purchase sustainably grown foods, organic foods, or those labeled Non-GMO products when possible.
4. Stay informed about which foods have been genetically modified. Such lists are easily found on the internet.