



BEYOND GM

Beyond false promises
Beyond failed technology
Beyond corporate control
Beyond environmental harm
Beyond gambling with our health

www.beyond-gm.org

ABOUT US



WHY BEYOND GM?

Beyond GM is a new independent initiative set up by experienced campaigners and journalists. Its goal is to raise the level of the debate on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the UK and elsewhere, at both the local and national level. Its activities aim to broaden the discussion about GMOs beyond the abstract, and often impenetrable, scientific and academic arena and out into the public arena.

The campaign aims to bring some vitality back into GM campaigning by working with the strengths, talent and commitment of real people all over the UK and bringing their views to the fore.

But it also has a serious purpose.

For two decades the idea of GMOs has been 'sold' to the public as a way to 'fix' the food system.

The truth is GM crops and foods were conceived at a time when many still believed that industrial farming was the answer to all our problems. Today they are little more than a crutch, used to prop up some of the worst, most damaging and most outdated aspects of a broken food system.

If anyone tells you that GM crops are the answer to the problems of food insecurity, environmental degradation, and world hunger it's a sure sign that they have failed to understand the true nature of these very serious problems.

Beyond GM will be raising questions and criticisms, but also focusing on solutions to providing nutritious food for a growing population that move us beyond the limited vision of GMOs to something altogether more sustainable and inspiring.

We want everyone to take part in some way, either by spreading the word via email and social media, by starting local groups, or by lending your skills and talents to help us start a bigger conversation.

If you care about your food, about what goes into it, where it comes from and the environment it is grown in, join us. Together we can build a movement and a better food system for the UK and beyond.

WHY NOW?

For 20 years a very visible public and media campaign has helped keep GM crops from being planted in the EU.

Most people could be forgiven for believing that the EU is 'safe' from GMOs, but the issue has never gone away. In reality the GM debate has, for some time, been at a stand-off, with consumers and NGOs largely refusing to accept GM and corporations, politicians and regulators trying to push it into farming and food.

This stand-off has allowed the GM debate to slip beneath the public radar, leaving many of us unaware of the latest developments or how these might affect us.

But things are changing rapidly. The biggest change is that the EU coalition that has blocked planting of GM crops has broken up. In January 2015 the European Parliament voted to allow individual Member States to make their own decisions about whether or not to grow GM crops.

This may sound like a good idea, but it creates more problems than it solves. GMOs don't respect geographical borders and yet there is no solid provision for what might happen if GM crops in one country cross-pollinate with those in another. Likewise, guidelines for opting out are very narrow and even require Member States to seek the consent of biotech companies before opting out. For these and other reasons, oversight at EU level is considered crucial to maintain tight control over the planting of GM crops.

Opening the door to GMOs

With the change in legislation, the UK will push ahead with plans to begin planting GM crops within the next two years - without any post-marketing monitoring or co-existence measures (necessary to protect organic and non-GMO farmers) in place.

Without public engagement debate about the justification for this move is likely to be limited, and the door will be left wide open for the planting of Roundup Ready (RR) crops, engineered to withstand repeated spraying with the herbicide glyphosate.

If and when RR oil seed rape, and eventually wheat (and maybe other cereals), comes along and is taken up by our farmers, the use of Roundup and other herbicides will increase dramatically, as it has done in the Americas, where most GM crops are currently grown.

This will lead to major problems affecting biodiversity and, critically, to an increase in residues of glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup, and AMPA, its breakdown product, in a range of foods. We are already seeing an increase in detected residues in bread and cereal products.

Officials continue to reassure the public that glyphosate is a 'safe' pesticide. Early on it was even promoted as being safer than caffeine! However, in 2015 the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a branch of the World Health Organization, declared glyphosate a 'probable human carcinogen'. Research continues to emerge showing levels of toxicity that had not been identified before and more evidence of health problems (including adverse impacts on kidneys, liver, reproductive organs, tumours etc).

There is also emerging evidence that glyphosate is a hormone disrupter and that it can concentrate in the body (in blood and breast milk) – something which it has long been claimed can't happen. The issue of whether the genetic modification process itself is toxic and therefore makes foods less safe to eat is also coming under increasing scrutiny.

As GM has fallen off the public agenda, supermarkets have begun to stock products made with GMO ingredients as well as meat, milk and eggs from animals fed on GM feed – without labelling.

Time to take action

It is likely that the level of adulteration with GMO ingredients will begin to increase in the UK food chain. At the moment, testing and evaluation of these crops and ingredients is either non-existent or not transparent, based on corporate information rather than independent research, and does not adequately assess either direct or indirect health risks.

We are fast approaching a tipping point when we will be inundated by GM and its associated pesticides, and the consequent health and environmental risks. The only way to stop or slow this momentum is for the public to become aware and engaged again; to show that there is a considerable constituency opposed to GM and thus force politicians to act according to this public mandate.

Beyond GM aims to take the lead in both exposing the risks of GM farming and foods, and helping people understand that there are more effective, safer and more sustainable ways to feed us all.



For more information email info@beyond-gm.org