

To: Secretary
Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Regional Services
Inquiry into primary producer access to gene technology

Please take notice of the way biodiversity and sustainable organic agriculture is under threat due to increasing power of transnational agrichemical companies. Because of the enormous profits involved they are withholding free access to agricultural GE from Australian researchers and farmers. They have monopoly ownership and control and want to use that power

to maximise their profits. As seed and other companies are bought up by the majors, monopoly control of our food supply is intensifying.

For example, Monsanto charges a big royalty on its Bt cottonseed (the first GE crop in Australia, around double the US license fee) so that farmers who grow it here are losing money. Farmers save a bit on chemicals, marketed by the same companies, but production is down too. The farmers are not permitted by the contracts with Monsanto to save seed for replanting the next year.

Australian researchers have developed some plants using genes owned by foreign companies, and they are withholding permission to commercialise those crops.

The upshot is that Australia's blind commitment to GE is wasting scarce research and development resources which should be spent on the clean, green organic alternatives which need urgent support to develop.

Moreover, if we go the GE path our export commodity buyers in Asia and Europe will not want produce from here. Organics is the growth industry and that's what we want to support!!

Have you ever tasted organic produce? Try the tomatoes, the bananas, the apples. The difference in flavour is extraordinary.

But apart from the delicious flavour of the organic produce, consider how organic farmers nurture the earth with farming methods that do not require the ever increasing doses of artificial chemicals that accompany the farming methods that companies like Monsanto sell to the farmers who buy their seed. Heavy use of pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilisers are part of the package that comes with the genetically engineered crops. These crops might have been bred to resist the drenching with herbicides and pesticides, or bred to have an inbuilt resistance to pests, but we need much more time and independent research to determine the long term effects of these massive changes to our foods and to the interrelated web of plants, animals and micro-organisms on which our life depends.

It is not surprising that the transnational companies who stand to make a great deal of money are lobbying very hard to avoid any labelling of processed foods that contain GE foods. Please consider that consumers are only able to have a fair and equal market place in which to shop if there are legal requirements in place to protect our right to know what is in the produce that is for sale as food.

Consider the future. Invest in research into local, sustainable, organic farming.

Yours sincerely
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