



Monthly Bulletin
on Genetic Engineering
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National News

1. Film World Shoots GM Foods!

Mahesh Bhatt Joins campaign against GM foods with a powerful missile from his arsenal

<http://www.indopia.in/India-usa-uk-news/latest-news/494387/Business/4/20/4>

Eminent filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt attacked the multinational companies for promoting genetically modified foods and released a short movie titled 'Poison on the Platter' about side-effects of such products.

"In their mad rush to capture the multi-billion dollar Indian agricultural and food industry, the biotech MNC's are bulldozing warnings by scientists about the adverse impact of GM foods on health and environment," Bhatt said.

Bhatt also countered the government's claim of not allowing the import of any GM foods into the country and said supermarkets in India are flooded with harmful food stuff." Indians are unfortunately kept in dark. Poison on the Platter is, therefore, an attempt to generate awareness among consumers and kick start an informed debate on the issue," he said.

Produced by Bhatt, the movie brings to focus experiences and opinions shared by people, mainly foreigners, about the adverse impact of GM products on human health and environment.

The technology behind GM foods has never been out of controversy in India, with advocates of bio-technology projecting it as a potent weapon to boost production through effective controls of pests and diseases while critics raise the issue of safety.

2. Prof Smith Reiterates Warning!

The Indian edition of the internationally acclaimed book, "Genetic Roulette", by Professor Jeffrey Smith was released last month under the joint sponsorship of DDS, SAGE and Other India Press (Goa). The book is available for sale at an affordable price of Rs.475/- with Other India Press (Goa admin@otherindiabookstore.com), Mapusa-403507

Following are some selected pieces of interviews Professor Smith gave at New Delhi and Thiruvanthapuram. The names of the agencies or persons interviewing him are mentioned in the brackets.

<http://www.peopleandplanet.net/doc.php?id=3496>

New Delhi, (Women's Feature Service)

Q: Do tell us about your campaign against genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

A: Our campaign targets four demographic groups that are receptive to dietary changes - health-conscious consumers, parents and schools, faith-based groups, and healthcare professionals and their patients. Within each group, the women, who generally do the shopping for the family, are clearly the most receptive and responsive gender. Thus, the tipping point is largely in their hands.

There are several serious, even catastrophic, dangers of GMOs. Genetically modified crops concentrate on the corporate control of food and increased herbicide use without increasing average yields. They endanger food security, are detrimental to sustainable and organic farming, and trap farmers in a cycle of debt and dependence. But the single greatest motivator for action is the health risk to consumers.

Q. Given the fact that awareness levels in the developed countries are higher, how effective has public opinion in the West been in trying to contain the export of genetically modified (GM) foods by multinational companies (MNCs)?

A: The most effective containment of exports has come from consumers in Europe and Japan, whose knowledge of the dangers of GMOs has translated into avoidance of GM products. The subsequent rejection of GM ingredients

by food companies there has limited US exports of GM crops and derivatives. This has been facilitated by mandatory labeling of GMOs, particularly in the European Union, which would alert consumers to GM content, and, therefore, keep companies on track with their non-GMO commitments.

Q: Has there been a perceptible impact of GE crops on India's farming community?

A: Hundreds or thousands of Indian farm workers who pick Bt cotton by hand are developing allergic-type reactions. The cotton is engineered with a gene from a soil bacterium called Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), which produces a natural insecticide. The reason it is in our crops is that the industry and government say the Bt toxin is completely safe for humans. In its natural state, it's used in organic agriculture and forestry. They, therefore, claim that Bt toxin has a history of safe use, and doesn't even interact with mammals; that it's destroyed in the digestive tract.

But this assumption ignores the evidence. About 500 people in the US and Canada developed allergic-type reactions when they were sprayed with natural Bt discharged from airplanes. When they fed natural Bt to mice, the mice developed a powerful immune response and damaged intestines. But the Bt engineered into crops is thousands of times more concentrated than the natural form and is designed to be more toxic.

When I reviewed the symptoms from the Indian cotton workers, they turned out to be the same symptoms that were described by the 500 people in North America who were sprayed with Bt. The Indian Bt cotton farmers allow sheep to graze on the cotton plants after harvest. According to several shepherds, within five to seven days, one out of every four sheep dies. Thousands of sheep have died in the

Andhra Pradesh region, and more will be added to those numbers the next year. There are also widespread reports of disease and death among buffalo, who either grazed on the Bt cotton plants or consumed Bt cottonseed or oil cakes.

When I visited Andhra Pradesh, I spoke to a group of women and asked if any of them experienced any reaction to BT cotton crop. After some hesitation, two women stood up and one of them revealed that she suffered from itching. I was also told that women cotton workers are embarrassed to discuss the details of their symptoms, so they don't come forward.

Q. A chapter in your book says that the risks posed by GE crops/GM foods are greater for women and children.

A: Pregnant women should most definitely avoid GMOs. A Russian study found that more than half of the babies from mother rats fed GM soy died within three weeks, compared to only a 10 per cent death rate for babies whose mothers ate non-GM soy. The offspring from the GM group were also smaller and could not conceive.

Q. In your opinion, does India really require GM foods?

A: The US spends three to five billion dollars per year to subsidise the GM crops that no one else wants. They are trying to force other countries to take GMOs to solve their own problems. The US department of Agriculture confirms that GMOs do not increase yields or farmer income, and in many cases reduce both.

In developing countries, GM crops are clearly disadvantageous. A study by the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) concluded that GMOs are not appropriate, and that industrial farming practices in general force small farmers and landless peasants off the land. Analysis of Bt

cotton in India consistently reveals that it provides far less income compared to farmers growing organic or NPM (non-pesticidal management) cotton. But these more appropriate and healthy systems don't have corporate champions to promote them.

Q. What would be the best strategy to regulate the introduction of GM food?

A: The best regulation would be to demand a ban of current GM crops and all outdoor field trials. Then India can invest in proper independent studies, which I am sure will confirm our conclusions that the current generation of GM crops is unsafe for humans, animals, and the environment.

Thiruvanthapuram (S.Usha)

<http://infochangeindia.org/200902147609/Agriculture/Features/Genetic-roulette.html>

Q. Proponents of GM claim that genetically engineered crops are not significantly different from those modified by nature or humans in the past. They argue that modified crops are as safe, or even safer, than those created through such time-tested methods. How do you react to this?

A. The concept that GM crops are not different from natural ones is a political one, not a scientific one. In 1992, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) claimed that they had no information to show that GM foods were substantially different from conventionally grown foods, and therefore were safe to eat. But internal memos made public by a lawsuit reveal that their position was staged by political appointees under orders from the White House to promote GMOs. FDA scientists, on the other hand, warned that GMOs could create unpredictable, hard-to-detect side effects, including allergies, toxins, new diseases, and nutritional problems. They urged long-term safety studies,

but were ignored. The FDA does not require any safety evaluations for GMOs. Instead, biotech companies, that have been found guilty of hiding the toxic effects of their chemical products, are now in charge of determining whether their GM foods are safe. The FDA official in charge of creating this policy was Michael Taylor, Monsanto's former attorney and later their vice-president.

Having worked with more than 30 scientists, over many years, we identified 65 health risks from GMOs which provide irrefutable, overwhelming evidence of harm. Those who still maintain that GMOs are safe are ignoring the evidence and may even be consciously distorting the truth.

Q. Those in favour of current genetic techniques argue that the technology may have beneficial results, for example, in the harsh agricultural conditions of Africa. They say that with modifications, existing crops could possibly be able to thrive in relatively hostile conditions, providing much-needed food to their people. What is your take on this?

A. Drought and salt tolerance involves many genes in complex interactions well beyond the current capabilities of GMO technology. In fact, traditional breeding is far more effective at generating crops with these needed traits. When GMOs are introduced, the multinationals tend to eliminate much of the traditional diverse seeds in the area. By eliminating this biodiversity the potential source of these naturally tolerant crops is threatened.

Q. Future envisaged applications of GMOs are diverse and include drugs in food, bananas that produce human vaccines against infectious diseases, metabolically engineered fish that mature more quickly, fruit and nut trees that yield years earlier... all these are apparently

beneficial to humankind. Are you not hindering the welfare of the human race by taking a stand against all kinds of modifications?

A. I wouldn't want to be hired by a company to try to undertake a recall of GM fish from the ocean. The self-propagating genetic pollution from GM crops released today can outlast the effects of global warming and nuclear waste. The drugs, vaccines, and altered fish properties could have irreversible and unpredictable effects on the environment. Therefore, in this infant stage of the understanding of DNA and GM technology, we must keep it in the lab.

Q. Where does India stand vis-à-vis GM?

A. My new book verifies Dr PM Bhargava's official assessment: Current GMOs are dangerous and are not adequately evaluated for health or environmental safety by the apex regulator — the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC). Their approvals are unsafe and unjustified. Dr Bhargava made his recommendations in letters to the prime minister and health minister after having been assigned by a Supreme Court order in February 2008 as an 'invitee' to the GEAC. The court order was in response to the 'prayers' in the public interest writ petition filed by Aruna Rodrigues, P V Satheesh and others, asking for independent experts to be appointed to the GEAC. Citing opinions and Supreme Court submissions by world-renowned scientists, the writ charged that 1) GM crops are intrinsically hazardous; (2) the GEAC's evaluation procedures are wholly inadequate to protect the health of Indian citizens and the environment; and 3) the need for an immediate five-year moratorium on the environmental release of any GMO.

Based on his 10-month review, Dr Bhargava confirms the charges.

Furthermore, he has drawn up a comprehensive list of tests which must be conducted before GM crops can be properly evaluated and approved. But, he says, only 10% of these are actually done, and they are designed and performed so poorly by the biotech companies that the findings are essentially worthless. With virtually no safeguards, trained personnel, or proper biosafety testing guidelines and procedures, the release of GM crops could have a potentially catastrophic effect in India.

Q. Are you aware of the GM Bill — the Food Standards and Safety Bill — proposed by the Government of India, and what are your impressions?

A. The proposed biotechnology law in India has obviously been drafted with the assistance of the biotech industry. In short, it gives the authority for GMO approvals to just four individuals, and disallows any appeal by any ministry or even the courts. It is another example of the draconian laws that have been introduced worldwide designed to force GMOs onto the market, in spite of valid objections based on scientific, economic, social, medical, and environmental objections and concerns. If implemented, the law may prove to have the worst legacy of any in India's history.

Q. Tell us a little about your book. Why *Genetic Roulette*?

A. I believe that GMOs being released into the environment is a great gamble because, one, there has been no assessment on the health effects, and two, there is a lot of misinformation. We are playing with fire, but it is more than fire because it self-reproduces. This is why I named the book *Genetic Roulette*. For those of you who don't know, roulette is a game of chance. You take a marble and you put it on a device (on the cover of my US book I have a wheel), and it could land on allergies,

death, sterility, toxins — all of which have been identified in the book. But the cover was changed for the Indian edition because most Indians don't play roulette. But I understand that you play snakes-and-ladders, another game of chance...

Q. Why does the American government not bring in mandatory labelling of GMOs? Is the public not aware enough about the issue to oppose it and force the government to label GM food?

A. First of all, people are ignorant of the fact that they eat GMOs. Including Monsanto, there are five agricultural biotech companies that make GMOs; Monsanto is by far the biggest and the most influential. Now, their public relations and lobbying efforts are legendary and public opinion can be moulded by their lobbying.

Q. You talk about educating consumers on all the issues. Do you realise that people are so alienated from science that they cannot understand the research that is going on, and also what they are putting on their plates? If the consumer is not informed how can (s)he make an informed decision?

A. When I give a talk in the US I survey the audience before and after as to their motivation and vigilance in avoiding GMOs. Every audience, from housewives to medical doctors, undergoes an immediate and dramatic transformation when it hears the evidence. So, we are absolutely sure that the average person will be highly motivated to avoid GMOs when they realise the risks they are taking.

Q. What change do you expect in the policies of the Obama government in the US in the matter of genetic modification, labelling etc?

A. You know I get kind of emotional when I think of today. I feel like giving a round

of applause to Barack Obama (laughs). Barack Obama is in favour of mandatory labelling of GMOs. We hope that he makes good not only on his promise but also uses comprehensive labelling because nine out of 10 Americans want GMOs labelled, 63% say that they would avoid GMOs if they were labelled. So labelling alone would likely eliminate GMOs from the food supply. However, Obama has also put together a team that includes very pro-GM individuals, which is of great concern to us. The minister or secretary of agriculture is the former governor of Iowa — the state that I live in — and he is biotech governor of the year. The person on the transition team for Obama was Michael Taylor, former attorney of Monsanto. He was in charge of the FDA study that said that no testing was necessary. So I think that he has been insulated from the truth about GMOs, and we intend to inform him of the truth. But I really believe that he is more suitable for the job than his predecessor was.

Q. Are there alternatives to increase food production?

A. There are effective, appropriate alternatives. An even larger study in 2006 looked at 286 projects to introduce sustainable techniques on more than 12 million farms in 57 countries, mostly in Africa. The research evaluated yield effects when farmers used approaches such as less tilling to conserve soil, integrated pest management — which favours ecological pest control over pesticide spraying — and improved management of soil nutrients. According to the study, adopting such approaches meant yields increased by an average of 79% and harvests of some crops such as maize, potatoes and beans doubled. These sustainable solutions help people reclaim the ability to feed themselves, by applying scientific rigour to make old-fashioned crop improvement methods more systematic and efficient, using seed

varieties that are well suited to local conditions. The model for GM crops, however, concentrates ownership of agriculture in the hands of a few multinational corporations, forces farmers to buy seeds each year, and reduces the diversity of seed genetics. In addition, in developing nations, people gain valuable nutrients by harvesting a diversity of wild plants that grow in the field with the crops. The stated goal of Monsanto and the biotech companies is to convert 100% of all seeds into genetically modified and patented seeds. This unprecedented replacement of nature will reap them billions of dollars. They continue to promise altruistic benefits from their technology, but this remains only in the realm of public relations.

3. “Be Safe Than Sorry” By Kanchi Kohli, Freelancer

Stiff farmer and citizen’s protests have been pitted against the Government of India’s plans of introducing Bt Brinjal, a genetically modified crop into farmer’s fields. If introduced it will be the first genetically modified food crop to enter our agriculture and food chain. As of now the only GM crop that is legally being sold in the market is Bt Cotton.

GM crops, it is said, go fundamentally against nature. They try and bring together genes of two species which would never intermingle naturally. For instance, if one has to grow tomato in an area where there is snow, scientists would try and introduce the gene of a high altitude fish into tomato and try and create a seed variety that will survive in the cold climate. It is important to know that such a habitat is not a natural one for tomatoes to grow.

Small farmers have always been great innovators and plant breeders. New seed varieties and creative bio based technologies have been successfully created and introduced for years on cultivated land. But all of this has been in sync with natural processes, and any biodiverse and ecologically sound farmer will vouch for the fact that their innovations do not

try and alter naturally occurring processes. Further, it is totally within the farmer’s control.

But, large seed corporations and their scientists think otherwise, with profit and the garb of global good on their agenda. Many of us are aware that there has been huge debate on the environment, social and health risks of GM crops. There are voices against such crops not just in our country but in USA which is the biggest perpetrator of this technology. One person who has been making sincere efforts to highlight the risks of GM crops is Prof. Jeffery Smith, Executive Director, Institute for Responsible Technology, USA. He is a leading spokesperson on the health dangers of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). Prof Smith was recently in India to share the findings of his new publication titled *Genetic Roulette: The Documented Health Risks of Genetically Engineered Foods*. The book highlights the dubious role of large multinational corporations in misleading the society world-over into using GM crops and food.

The book is based on hard facts. It has detailed case studies from all over the world including the Indian experience. I had the good chance to hear him at a presentation in New Delhi on 23rd January 2009 when South Against Genetic Engineering (SAGE) and Other India Press released the Indian edition of the book.

The book questions as to why the biotech industry avoids scientific debates. Smith says, “...the biotech industry has studiously avoided debating the health risks of their foods. That is because their claims of safety do not hold up well under scrutiny. There is no trove of alternative studies, new findings, or scientific breakthroughs that get GM foods get off the hook.” Instead, he says, any issues raised against GMOs are countered by the industry as being emotional, unscientific, bunch of rubbish and so on.

Critical questions are also raised with regards to the need to prove the link between GMOs and the allergies that are on an all time rise in countries like the USA and now in other parts of the world where GMOs are being used. There is absolutely no post-marketing surveillance to ascertain this linkage. Several scientist, doctors and consumers are seeing

the links and highlighting them too, and this is where strict surveillance and research need to be carried forward.

Today around 56 GM crops which include 41 food crops are at various stages of trials in India in both public and private institutes. This is my call to all to speak out against making farmers and consumers guinea pigs of corporate controlled and profit driven agendas. We'd rather be safe than sorry.

GM Brinjal hogs media limelight

4. Safety concerns land GM brinjal on regulatory table

<http://www.livemint.com/2009/02/02235552/Safety-concerns-land-GM-brinjal.html>

GEAC will examine the merit of two recent international reports that claim the food product isn't safe

New Delhi: A regulatory body that oversees genetically modified, or GM, crops is set to look at the merit of two recent international reports that say the Indian GM brinjal isn't safe for consumption.

The scrutiny by the genetic engineering approval committee, or GEAC, may impede the progress of the GM brinjal from field trials to dining tables. If approved, it would be the first genetically modified food to become commercially available in the country.

Pushpa Bhargava, a Supreme Court-appointed observer to GEAC, said: "I've been told that a sub-committee would be appointed to look into these reports. But that would be pointless, unless it was made up of experts independent of GEAC."

Bhargava, a molecular biologist and former vice-chairman of the National Knowledge Commission, a high-level advisory body to the Prime Minister, has been critical of the functioning of GEAC. He has also frequently questioned "the manner in which GM crops have been given approval in India".

Mint couldn't immediately confirm with GEAC about the plans to set up a committee to study the reports.

The two studies questioning the safety of Indian GM brinjal were made public last month. One was by Gilles-Eric Seralini, a scientist at the Committee for Independent Research and Information on Genetic Engineering (Criigen), a French environmental organization, and the other by Judy Carman of Australia-based Institute of Health and Environmental Research, an organization that studies health effects of genetically modified organisms. These studies say that the tests performed by Mahyco Ltd, a Maharashtra-based seed company, are insufficient to prove the safety of Indian GM brinjal. Mahyco wants to commercially launch GM brinjal in India.

Seralini's report said: "... This GMO (genetically modified organism) may present a serious risk to human and animal health and the release should be refused in the state." Seralini was commissioned by Greenpeace India to conduct the study.

In her report, Carman states that she had conducted the study partly on a request by Aruna Rodrigues, an activist who's petitioning the Supreme Court for a moratorium on GM seed testing in India.

Mahyco, in a press statement on Monday, claimed that all its studies followed norms prescribed by GEAC. "We've not been told about the committee yet," said M.K. Sharma, general manager, Mahyco. "We are at advanced stages of field trial for GM brinjal and our results are extremely promising."

5. Farmers Trash 'Bt Brinjal'

<http://www.hindu.com/2009/01/30/stories/2009013050750300.htm>

Farmers led by Sahaj Samrudha, one of the front runners of organic farming movement in Karnataka and representing progressive farmers, while working in co-ordination with a larger group "GM-free Karnataka" organised a funeral procession of "brinjal", which is widely cultivated in Karnataka, and is commonly called the king of vegetables.

The protest, held in Belgaum, was not just to oppose introduction of genetically modified (GM) crops and convince the Government to declare Karnataka a GM-free State to protect health of the people but also to draw immediate attention towards the Bt. Brinjal — the first GM

food crop waiting to get green signal from the Centre.

Ravi R., convener of Sahaj Samrudha, said farmers through their protest were essentially bemoaning the imminent death of regular crops once Bt. brinjal took its roots in the fields. Mr. Ravi said farmers were upset that universities like University of Agricultural Sciences in Dharwad had opened up trials of such potentially dangerous crops.

A progressive farmer and Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha leader, Komar Muttappa of Belgaum said independent scientific analysis on Bt. brinjal was that it would be one of the greatest threats to health of people and agriculture.

6. The Imminent Danger

<http://www.businessworld.in/index.php/Economy/The-Future-Of-Food.html>

India appears determined to approve its first genetically engineered food — Bt brinjal. The new crop, developed by Mumbai-based Mahyco, which is 26 per cent owned by the US biotech giant Monsanto, could be available in the next few weeks as large-scale field trials get over in the coming days.

A host of other crops, including rice, tomato, okra, mustard, potato, onion, maize, wheat, tea and banana, currently under development, will follow suit and promise to alter the course of

Indian agriculture, as well as the way we eat. Advocates of GM foods claim that Bt crops could provide a long-term solution to food security in India, which produced only 70 million tonnes of wheat and 90 million tonnes of rice against a demand of 72 million tonnes and 93 million tonnes, respectively, in 2007-08. And the gap is widening. Yet, many questions about the health and the environment impact of these technologies remain unanswered, and NGOs such as Greenpeace see in the advent of GM crops a conspiracy between seed companies and the government. GM food would represent a multi-billion dollar opportunity for agro-biotech firms such as Mahyco, Bangalore-based Avesthagen and Metahelix Life Sciences. "Is the priority here public health or the growth of the biotech seed industry?" asks Mira Shiva, member of the All India Drug Action Network and the Initiative for Health, Equity and Society.

Mahyco is likely to be the first firm in India to bring out a GM food crop, as field trials for its Bt brinjal, that promises to increase yield by 50 percent, come to an end. "Large-scale field trials started back in August 2007. So the Indian Institute of Vegetable Research, which is carrying out the research in Uttar Pradesh should submit its results to GEAC this month itself," says Mahendra Sharma, Mahyco's General Manager. "We hope to be able to launch this year."

GE & Health implications

7. Doctors caution Against GM Foods

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/doctors-caution-against-genetically-modi.../420408/>

Ludhiana: At a time when Bt Brinjal may soon be introduced into the market, several renowned doctors of the city today initiated a consumer awareness campaign against genetically modified (GM) foods, citing health problems.

The doctors called for an immediate moratorium on all GM foods and vowed to

intensify the campaign in the coming months so that the Government sets up a safety assessment protocol to look into the safety of such food items.

The campaign, "I am no lab rat", was launched in Chandigarh on January 30. It is a consumer awareness and mobilisation campaign called as part of a nation-wide campaign. The campaign was initiated in Amritsar on February 3.

Speaking at a seminar at Dayanand Medical College and Hospital today, Dr G P I Singh, an expert in social and preventive medicine and

member of Doctors' for Food and Bio-Safety, pointed out that the decreased calorific content in Bt Brinjal and altered consumption would result in an adverse impact on nutrition.

"This may jeopardise the national health programmes for control of tuberculosis, diarrhoea and sexually transmitted diseases," he said.

The movement against GM foods is gathering momentum at a time when the biotech industry is seeking to introduce the first GM food crop in India in the form of Bt Brinjal, created by inserting a bacterial gene with antibiotic-resistant genes so that the plant produces its own poison against a certain set of pests.

Dr Inderjeet Kaur of All India Pingalwara Charitable Society said: "Indian regulators have compromised their objectivity by basing their approval on data submitted by the applicant company itself."

Dr L S Chawla, former Vice-Chancellor of Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, said: "Allowing GM foods like Bt Brinjal without prominent labelling will be a violation of a consumer's right to know what he/she is eating and the right to safe food. Bt Brinjal did not undergo any independent, long-term testing and it has already been established that GM foods have an adverse impact, including inter-generational effects, on the population."

The doctors collectively stated that commercial considerations must not be allowed to run at cross-purposes with long-term implications on human and animal health. The conference was attended by Dr Arun Mitra, Vice-President of the Indian Medical Association, Punjab, and noted ophthalmologist Padma Shri Dr Daljit Singh.

GE issues around the World

8. Hungary to defy European Commission call to scrap ban on GMO crops

<http://tiny.cc/0oAC7>

Hungary will keep its ban on GMO (genetically modified organisms) maize imports and the planting of GMO seeds, Agriculture Ministry undersecretary Zoltán GQgös announced. The European Commission recently called on Hungary to entirely lift its GMO ban. Last week the EU's executive arm backed proposals that would grant standard ten-year licences for the two GMO maize types. Hungary, one of the region's biggest grain producers, became the first country in eastern Europe to ban GMO crops and foods in 2005.

9. Italy: No quality brand for products employing GMOs

<http://tiny.cc/nZiVk>

A bill recently filed in the Italian Senates Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agro-Food Production provides for a stricter regulation on the GMOs employed in Italy.

According to the bill, no quality brand can be assigned to products employing GMOs, in order to protect the country's genetic resources and agriculture and husbandry from the risk of an unrestrained spread of GMOs and their by-products.

Therefore, it is forbidden for all national quality certified agro-food products to employ raw materials, cattle feed and additives containing GMOs. If a company does not abide by the regulation, it is not allowed to use a quality brand.

Moreover, the bill forbids the cultivation in open fields of GMOs and the breeding of genetically modified cattle, as well as the sale of any kind of genetically modified seeds in the national territory.

The measure is now to complete its passage through Parliament before the final approval.

10. France to maintain ban on Monsanto GM maize

http://greenbio.checkbiotech.org/news/france_maintain_ban_monsanto_gm_maize_pm

BRUSSELS, Belgium — France will keep a ban on genetically modified maize from US biotech giant Monsanto until the environmental risks are clarified, French Prime Minister Francois Fillon said Thursday.

“France is maintaining the suspension while it awaits a (European) Commission decision which it will respect,” Fillon said at a joint press conference with commission chief Jose Manuel Barroso in Brussels.

His comments came shortly after France’s food watchdog said it had concluded that the GMO maize is safe, contradicting an earlier report that led to the French ban.

“The decision to suspend the growing (of the maize) was taken as a precaution due to the potential environmental risks associated with a contamination of non-GMO crops,” Fillon said.

The watchdog report concerns the health aspect, rather than the environmental risk, he argued.

The AFSSA watchdog report, which became public after it was revealed in the daily Le Figaro, angered environmentalists and embarrassed President Nicolas Sarkozy’s government which had resorted to a special EU measure to outlaw the crop.

The European Commission, the EU’s executive arm, has called on France, as well as Austria, Greece and Hungary, to lift their safeguard measures against EU-approved GM crops.

11. “Stop the Genie”

http://bioenergy.checkbiotech.org/news/union_concerned_scientists_raises

[questions_about_genetically_modified_corn_biofuel](#)

Corn-based ethanol, once a star on the alternative energy scene, has fallen from favor in the past year, battered by reports that raising corn for fuel raids the world’s pantry and that corn ethanol has a heavier carbon footprint than originally thought.

Many now argue over whether the US should continue to grow corn for fuel or make the switch to grasses that can be grown on less desirable land, with fewer pesticides and fertilizers, or use plant waste to make fuel.

Now a new debate looms: Should the US allow genetically altered corn to be grown for use as biofuel?

The Union of Concerned Scientists wants to stop that genie before it leaves the bottle, because it believes that genetically modified corn will inevitably mix with and contaminate corn grown for food products.

This monthly bulletin is brought out by South Against Genetic Engineering (SAGE), a coalition of civil society activists, farmers, scientists, academicians, and consumer groups of four Southern States of India, viz., Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. SAGE has been waging a concerted battle against genetic engineering through a series of activities that involve public protests, media actions, seminars, consultations and publication of a series of educational materials.