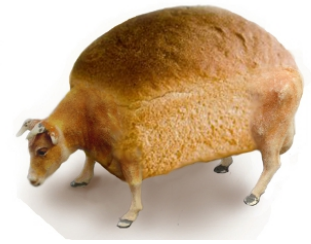


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02/05/12

TAKE THE FLOUR BACK
27th May 2012

A mass action
against Genetically
Modified wheat



Dear Rothamsted Research,

Re: Take the flour back! Public day of action

Many thanks for your letter dated 27th April.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage with you in a public debate over the forth-coming weeks, so that both sides of the debate have an equal chance to hear and understand each others' perspectives. To this end we invite you to join us on neutral ground, with a neutral chairperson, for an open exchange of opinions and concerns.

We are pleased that you are calling for rigorous evidence-backed discussion and are therefore somewhat bemused to note your insistence that aphid-resistant GM wheat will decrease pesticide use. This often-repeated biotech industry claim has been widely discredited. (1) On the contrary, findings in the US, Canada and India, show that weeds and predators rapidly develop immunity to GM strategies, resulting in the use of ever increasing amounts of herbicides and pesticides. (2) The concern that the GM Cadenza wheat you are trialling could lead to an increase, rather than a reduction in pesticides, was raised by a geneticist from EcoNexus in her submission to DEFRA, as well as by GM Freeze.

In your letter you make no mention of the serious issue of the antibiotic-resistant marker gene. You assert that "all plants in all types of agriculture are genetically modified to serve humanity's needs", suggesting that selective breeding is a similar science to genetic modification, which is both false and misleading. You are openly releasing a synthetic version of a compound that can not be regarded as "substantially equivalent", and has had no long-term health safety tests whatsoever for human consumption, or for its impacts on non-target species. This practice does not therefore adhere to the EU's precautionary principle.

In the last few weeks Swiss scientists have published data demonstrating that the *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) toxin Cry1Ab emitted as a pesticide by genetically modified (GM) Bt maize increases mortality in young ladybird larvae. (3) This is just another example of how a non-target organism can end up being inadvertently harmed by unforeseen problems with GM technologies. Again, this fails to show regard for the precautionary principle on which sound and responsible science should be based.

You confuse our description of GM crops as not being "properly tested", i.e. not being part of long-term detailed tests, as mentioned above, with the idea that you should be able to conduct tests in the open air without

the aforementioned tests carried out first, putting our farming industry and our environment at risk.

You state "we have pledged that our results will not be patented and will not be owned by any private company" yet you suggested in an interview in Farmers Weekly only a month ago that "companies are very interested and they are keeping a watching brief". (4) Which is it? We are of course aware of Professor Moloney's former presidency of SemBioSys Genetics Inc (5) (of whom Dow Agro Science were investors). (6 & 7) We note that he developed the first transgenic oilseed rape plants using canola, which served as the basis for Monsanto's Roundup Ready and Bayer's Liberty Link canola products. (8) Furthermore, the Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), who are funding this trial using public money, include a consultant for Dow Agro Science and a Non-Executive Director of Syngenta on their council. (9) If this trial is successful, only a large agrochemical company would have the infrastructure to make the GM wheat commercially available.

We are particularly concerned about ensuring the protection of what is probably the world's oldest classical grassland experiment. We are appalled that you are jeopardizing the integrity of this scientific inheritance by planting GM wheat metres away from it. We believe your recklessness in planting GM in the adjacent field seriously undermines your institution's scientific credibility.

You say that to "suggest that we have used a 'cow gene' and that our wheat is somehow part-cow betrays a misunderstanding which...has no basis in scientific reality." Yet the description of the gene you have synthesised as being "not found naturally" and having "most similarity to that from cow" is taken directly from your own application to DEFRA. (10)

Many groups challenging GMOs do so in the full knowledge and direct experience that agro-ecological farming practices are more productive than GM and industrial agriculture, and that they ensure the health of humans, ecosystems, livelihoods and food security. The value of their work to revive seed diversity, farmers' rights, indigenous knowledge, organic agriculture techniques, and local markets was confirmed at the highest levels by the 2008 International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). The largest-ever assessment of global agriculture, it involved more than 400 scientists and 30 governments, and was dismissive of GM's potential to address global hunger. (11) Instead it recognised that the only way to ensure future food, farming and ecosystems was through a wholesale emphasis on agro-ecological practices. (12)

We are not in a minority with our fears over this trial and the potential commercial introduction of GM wheat that could follow. Recent EU surveys show that the majority of the public still don't trust GM food. (13) Leading figures from the bread industry have also come out in strong opposition. Last week the 'Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union', and the 'Real

Bread Campaign' submitted a pledge to DEFRA refusing to use GM wheat, signed by over 350 bakers, millers, farmers and consumers. In planting the GM wheat, you have shown total disregard for the reasonable concerns of the public at large, who say they don't want to eat GM, and do not want to be treated as guinea pigs.

By pressing ahead with these plans you threaten the future livelihoods of the farming community. Via your close connections to North America you know that cross-contamination can and does happen, and that farmers have lost millions in exports as a result.

You ask us not to pull up the GM wheat. We ask you not to recklessly endanger livelihoods and our food supply by letting it remain in the open air. We do not believe that it should be lawful for you to spread contamination in this way. If the government, through its close bio-tech industry ties, (14) refuses to take responsibility for this problem, then we are left with no other choice.

We are aware that you have been in receipt of many expressions of concern in regard to this trial. You have shown that you will not listen.

(When a powerful minority threatens democratically expressed wishes of the majority, direct action becomes necessary. The suffragettes' campaign of direct action helped women get the vote. The vast numbers of people who pulled up crops when the bio-tech industry tried to introduce GM into this country 15 years ago is the reason why our countryside has not been contaminated.)

We invite anyone who is worried about the impact of genetically modified crops on our health, our farming industry, and our environment to join us on 27th May in showing our opposition to this trial. We will come together to 'take the flour back', celebrating the thriving wheat industry we already have in the UK, with bakers, farmers, bee keepers, allotment holders, and other bread-lovers.

Yours sincerely,

Take the Flour Back

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