

Two thirds want GM to be kept off their plate - new opinion poll

15 June 2010

Two thirds of people in the UK want GM crops to be kept out of the food chain, a new survey reveals today (Tuesday, 15 June 2010). Friends of the Earth and GM Freeze are urging the Government and supermarkets to listen to public opinion and take action to protect our food and farming from GM.

The GfK NOP survey for Friends of the Earth and GM Freeze also revealed that:

- less than 40 per cent were aware that GM is currently creeping onto their plates via imported GM animal feed being fed to animals in British factory farms;
- while there is currently no requirement for retailers to identify animal products containing GM to consumers, 89 per cent of those surveyed wanted these products to be clearly labelled;
- 72 per cent would pay extra for non-GM food.

The survey comes as Friends of the Earth and GM Freeze have learnt that that US- owned food retailer Asda has abandoned its commitment to GM-free eggs and poultry. The campaigning groups are calling on Asda and other supermarkets to respond to public opinion by pledging to keep GM out of the nation's meat and dairy.

Friends of the Earth's food campaigner Kirtana Chandrasekaran said:

"Despite a huge PR push by the former Government, consumers are more sceptical than ever about genetic modification, and want to be able to choose food that's guaranteed to be GM free.

"By abandoning its commitment to GM-free animal feed for chickens and sneaking GM onto its customers' plates, Asda is going against shoppers' wishes and funding animal feed plantations that are wiping out South American rainforests.

"People should tell supermarkets and their MPs to protect our food and farming from GM and support planet-friendly farming instead."

Pete Riley GM Freeze said:

"These results send a very clear message to government and retailers that any weakening of policies on the import and use of GM feed will not be welcomed by the public.

"They are demanding that there should be a clear non-GM choice and are willing to pay more for it.

"Despite the rhetoric from industry and government about the possible benefits of GM crops the British public appears to remain very sceptical.

"Proposals from the Food Standards Agency to spend hundreds of thousands pounds of taxpayers' money on a GM public dialogue in a crude attempt to shift public opinion on GM should now be scrapped".

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. People can urge supermarkets to stay GM free at
http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/biodiversity/press_for_change/asda_rolls_back_on_gm_23592.html

2. According to a survey of 1,000 adults in the UK carried out by GFK NOP on Friday 4 to Sunday 6 June:

- 41% don't know that animals are fed on GM animal feed
- 66% would like to buy meat and dairy from animals fed non-GM diet.
- 63% want supermarkets to only supply products with non-GM feed
- 89% want clear labelling of GM fed animals
- 72% would be willing to pay a premium (2p per kilo) for non GM feed

3. This result shows how public opposition to the use of GM ingredients in animal feed has increased since an identical poll in 2006. Then only 50% of people opted to avoid GM feed.

4. Asda revealed in an e-mail to GM Freeze that they can no longer assure customers that the animals used for their poultry meat and eggs were not fed a GM diet.

5. Friends of the Earth and GM Freeze are concerned that the model of industrial agriculture that GM crops are based on, which includes monoculture plantations of one crop, heavy use of chemicals and expensive patented seeds and technology are not appropriate for the vast majority of farmers in the world. They are pushing for more ecological farming methods which have broader environmental and socio-economic benefits which can reduce hunger and produce more food more effectively. Their concerns are in line with the most extensive farming research ever conducted, 2008's IAASTD Agricultural Assessment, which showed no clear role for GM crops.
http://www.agassessment.org/reports/IAASTD/EN/Agriculture%20at%20a%20Crossroads_Global%20Summary%20for%20Decision%20Makers%20%28English%29.pdf