

# Monsanto's genetically engineered menu for Canada

Lucy Sharratt, coordinator, Canadian Biotechnology Action Network



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It has been 15 years since genetically engineered (GE) crops were introduced in Canada and, thus far, the sum total of the Canadian GE experiment consists of GE corn, canola, soy and, as of 2009, sugar beet (white sugar beet for processing into sugar). These four crops are the only GE crops grown in Canada. Add GE cotton and the small amounts of GE papaya and squash grown in the US and you have the complete list of GE crops grown in the world.

Until now, the GE foods in our grocery stores have been processed food ingredients from corn, canola and soy. This year, however, we may see the first GE vegetable in the produce section since the GE potato and tomato disappeared from the shelves.

It seems Monsanto has incorporated its GE insect resistant (Bt) technology into some sweet corn varieties now on the market in Canada. Monsanto has been reluctant to introduce whole GE foods since its Bt potato was defeated through consumer protest in 2001. Monsanto's Bt technology creates toxic plants that kill the insects that try to eat them, a technology that has been difficult for the public to swallow. In fact, just this February, the Government of India halted Monsanto's Bt eggplant due to unrelenting protests by consumers and farmers.

Remarkably, a new GE potato has just been approved in Europe, to the horror and protest of many EU countries. It's engineered to have higher starch content for industrial processing, with leftovers to be fed to livestock. For the moment though, this potato will remain in Europe. In Canada, we face the immediate threat of Monsanto's GE alfalfa. Plantings may be allowed in the US this summer and will likely be followed by an attempt to commercialize in Canada. Contamination from GE alfalfa in the US is inevitable and a very serious threat to our entire organic food and farming system. We may not realize it, but alfalfa is the third largest crop grown in Canada, by area, and is used by many different types of farmers. Alfalfa is fed to livestock and dairy cows as well as appearing as little, green sprouts in our sandwiches. It's irreplaceable for organic farmers because of its many unique benefits, including its role in building soil. Though GE alfalfa is actually already approved for human and environmental safety in Canada, it is not yet legal to sell the seeds here.

GE alfalfa might not yet inspire outrage, but its consequences will be outrageous and we must work urgently to stop it. More obviously unpalatable is the University of Guelph's GE "Enviropig™," which is not quite ready for the market – and will never get there if consumers mobilize this year.

Resistance to GE is increasing in North America, as the food movement grows. Organic farming prohibits the use of GE and promotes the development of a strong alternative to Monsanto's corporate menu. Eating certified organic food is one way to avoid GE and to support the farmers who reject corporate seeds. This year, let's support these farmers by working to stop GE alfalfa and committing to a better food system.

\* For updates, please check [cban.ca/GEfoods](http://cban.ca/GEfoods) For a guide to GE-free food, visit [gmoguide.greenpeace.ca](http://gmoguide.greenpeace.ca) Also check out [gefreesbc.org](http://gefreesbc.org) and [spec.bc.ca/gardens/gmo.php](http://spec.bc.ca/gardens/gmo.php)