

Workshop Title: Latest News About GMOs

Panelist Names:

- Rick North, Campaign for Safe Food, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
- Dr. Lisa Weasel, Portland State University (out sick, but sent presentation)

Note Taker: Nancy Toth, Eugene Water & Electric Board

Room: 205

Estimated Attendees: 25

Notes:

Website: Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) Campaign for Safe Food
(<http://www.psr.org/chapters/oregon/safe-food/campaign-for-safe-food.html>)

rBGH (recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone):

- linked to cancer rate increases
- banned in some other countries
- increases milk production 5-15%
- not used much in OR (0-5%)
- bad for cows – can result in 16 different medical conditions, such as mastitis, and increases resistance to antibiotics

GE, GM, GMO (genetically engineered, genetically modified, genetically modified organism): used interchangeably. Refers to the insertion of a gene from one species into a different species to produce a desired effect (such as herbicide resistant). Not a natural process that would result from sexual reproduction.

Major GE crops: soybeans (90%), cotton (83%), canola (75%), sugarbeets, also corn and papaya

- most raw fruits and vegetables are not GE, bread (wheat) is not GE

Studies have shown some adverse reactions to GE crops from animals. If it was a drug being used in these studies, the FDA would probably **not** allow it on the market.

How can you assess harm to human health? GE products are not required to be labeled. Allergies can be caused by many different things and cancer takes years to develop.

FDA:

- declared all GE food “substantially equivalent” to regular food
- does not do food safety testing or independent testing
- signs off on biotech food safety claims

Biopharmaceutical crops: plants genetically engineered to produce drugs and chemicals they could not produce naturally; planted out in the open, some not tested. PSR is pushing for stricter regulation on the biopharm industry, such as requiring these crops to be grown only inside an enclosed area, similar to drug industry.

New OR Rules (around biopharmaceutical crops)

- Equal jurisdiction with Health Division
- State officials review CBI (confidential business information)
- Environmental effects given equal weight with ag, health, economic concerns
- Preference toward inside, non-food plants
- Public hearing/comments

One of the goals of the PSR's Campaign for Safe Food is to discontinue production of any dairy products from cows treated with rBGH. PSR also supports using the Precautionary Principle, which basically means to err on the side of caution when considering approval/use of GMO products in the face of scientific uncertainty about whether or not they are safe or have health effects.

Latest News on GMOs

- account for 53% global soy acreage
- top growers include the US, Argentina, and Brazil
- in OR, the largest GMO crops are alfalfa and sugar beets (Willamette Valley)
- in OR in 2002, labeling law failed
- AquaBounty is pushing for approval of GE salmon
- Center for Food Safety (<http://truefoodnow.org/>) and Earthjustice (<http://www.earthjustice.org/>) has filed suit to try and ban GE sugar beets, on the basis that they were approved without proper consideration of environmental and socioeconomic impacts

Other resources: Center for Food Safety <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/>