



The WTO: What in the world it means to the food Canadians eat

Canadians have become international guinea pigs in the multi-billion-dollar food industry plan to use genetically engineered (GE) foods in everyday grocery products.

In Europe, ten major food companies – from Nestlé to Kraft – have bowed to immense public pressure and removed GE foods from supermarket shelves. But in Canada these GE foods – for example, corn and potatoes raised with built-in pesticides – are still out there. That means everything from beer to baby food could contain genetically engineered ingredients.

At the next World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle this November, the United States will be pushing on behalf of its bio-tech food industry to ensure that GE foods have guaranteed market access worldwide.

The WTO is the most powerful international institution on the planet. Its stated goal is trade liberalization, but it really is trying to fashion itself as a world trade government with the power to strike down laws of countries that are seen as too trade restrictive.

When it comes to our food safety is any trade treaty worth the gamble?

Many Europeans don't think so. They're worried about so-called "Frankenfoods." And they have reason to worry. Recent food scares, from "mad cow" disease in Britain to dioxin-tainted chicken in Belgium, have shaken consumer confidence in the ability of governments to police the food industry.

The WTO recently ruled against a European ban on Canadian hormone-treated beef, even though Europeans remain unconvinced it's safe to eat.

If the bio-tech giants have their way, the WTO will force European countries to accept GE foods. But not without a fight. As one British expert said: "The nature of genetic engineering is that it's very unpredictable, and when something goes wrong you can't recall it. With GE crops, the risks far outweigh the benefits."

With billions of dollars at stake, the multinational agrifood businesses are staking out the WTO meetings as a sure avenue to huge profits. But if biotechnology runs amok it will be a catastrophe. This is not a time to be complacent.

If you to want help reduce the risk, here's what you can do:

- ▶ **Call, write or fax your Member of Parliament and Minister of International Trade Pierre Pettigrew.**

Ask them to oppose any new deals at the WTO.
(To get your MP's name and phone number, call 1 800 267-7360.)

Write to: Pierre Pettigrew
Minister of International Trade
507 Confederation Building
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6
Tel. (613) 995-8872
Fax. (613) 995-9926
Email: PettiP@parl.gc.ca

- ▶ **Inform and mobilize your community.**
- ▶ **Write a letter to your local paper.**
- ▶ **Organize an event.**
- ▶ **Talk about the Seattle WTO negotiations and the corporate threats to Medicare, public education, environmental protections and labour standards.**
- ▶ **Lobby your provincial elected representative and ask your city council to adopt a resolution opposing any new deals at the WTO.**



A SHADOW ON OUR FUTURE

For more information on the campaign to stop new WTO deals and how to join call **1 800 387-7177**. Or log on to **www.canadians.org** for updates on campaign activities and a calendar of campaign events in your area.



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