

PRESS RELEASE

GM-free Ireland Network • Dublin, Monday 30 April 2007

ILLEGAL GM MAIZE ENTERS EU THROUGH IRELAND

Greenpeace & GM-free Ireland demand blockade of all US maize shipments
Clouds of GM powder contaminate Dublin Docklands
Fianna Fail's GM food traceability system in tatters
Irish farmers plan to phase out GM animal feed

Photographs available for download at <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/pakrac>

The GM-free Ireland Network and Greenpeace International called today for a blockade of US maize imports following laboratory tests on Friday which prove that a shipment of US animal feed intercepted in Dublin Port and later in Rotterdam entered the EU illegally with a cargo contaminated by unauthorised and toxic varieties of genetically modified (GM) maize.

The certified laboratory analysis showed 2.4% contamination for a GM maize variety called Herculex patented by Pioneer / Dow Agrosciences, which is approved in the USA but illegal in the EU. The tests also showed 20% positive for GM maize MON863 patented by Monsanto; the latter is still approved for animal feed and human food in the EU, even though the European Food Safety Authority has been forced to review its approval following allegations of scientific fraud, cover up, and a recent peer-reviewed study by French scientists which found it causes serious liver and kidney damage in laboratory animals.

GM-free Ireland and Greenpeace called for the blockade following their discovery of the contaminated animal feed aboard the *Pakrac* which arrived in Dublin from New Orleans on 2 April. The cargo unloaded here included distiller's grain probably extracted from a GM maize variety that contains its own pesticide, and hulls from GM soya beans thought to contain high level residues of Monsanto's toxic *Roundup* weedkiller, which has been found to cause toxicity to human placental cells within hours of exposure, at levels ten times lower than those found in agricultural use. The remainder of the cargo, consisting of GM maize pellets, was unloaded in Rotterdam.

The ship's captain said he was unaware of the contamination because the US authorities certified the cargo as "non-GMO". Dublin Port Company harbourmaster, Capt. David Dignam said all he knew is that the *Pakrac* carried 16,000 tonnes of "agricultural products". The Port Company and the receiving agent, S.J. Murphy & Co. Ltd (a subsidiary of R. A. Burke) also said they were unaware of the cargo's specific contents. The importer R & H Hall (Ireland's biggest importer and supplier of animal feed ingredients, and a subsidiary of IAWS Group Plc), claimed the only cargo unloaded in Dublin was GM soya hulls and distiller's grain from GM maize, adding that the latter did not carry a GM label to identify its provenance because the transgenic DNA "would not survive the process used to extract it from the GM maize". The tests commissioned by Greenpeace took two weeks to find the first illegal GM content because the lab did not know what type of GMO maize they had to look for, since neither the ship's captain nor any regulatory body had been informed what possible contamination might have been present. No tests have yet been carried out to find out if the cargo unloaded here is also contaminated by the Herculex and MON863 varieties. Further contamination of farmers, livestock and consumers will occur if these GM products are allowed to enter the market.

Contaminated bankers, brokers and commodity traders

Bankers, brokers, commodity traders and residents around Dublin's Docklands are routinely exposed to clouds of GM powder when contaminated animal feed shipments are unloaded here. GM-free Ireland and Greenpeace obtained photographic evidence of clouds of GM powder being repeatedly blown off a bucket crane, as the *Pakrac's* cargo was slowly unloaded from the ship at the Odlums silos in Alexandra Basin. The wind carried the powder towards the P&O European Ferries terminal, the Point Depot concert venue, and nearby office buildings. Witnesses said the unloading was still underway on the afternoon of the following day.

Irish meat and dairy produce from GM-fed animals refused by EU retailers

This unauthorised GM maize is the third type of illegal GM food or feed known to have entered the EU through Ireland in the last two years. Three quarters of a million tonnes of illegal and toxic varieties of GM animal feed now routinely enter the EU through Ireland each year, contaminating our food chain without the knowledge of the authorities, farmers or consumers. Most of Ireland's non-organic livestock are fed on GM ingredients. A related loophole in EU law allows the resulting meat and dairy produce to be

sold without a GM label. But leading retailers in France, Italy, Russia, Switzerland, and the UK who previously made a voluntary ban on GM food, have recently extended their bans to meat, poultry and dairy produce from livestock fed on GM ingredients. As a result, Irish exporters of live cattle and beef, lamb and dairy produce are being excluded from prime EU markets unless accompanied by an accredited certification proving their food chain is GM-free from farm to fork.

Regulatory failure

The Minister for Agriculture and Food, Mary Coughlan claims that, "since April 2004 all feed imports have been subjected to inspection for accuracy of GM labelling and very high levels of compliance have been detected." But Liam Hyde of the Department's Animal Feedingstuffs Section confirmed that imported animal feed is only tested for GM content on a random basis, adding that he was "unaware" of the French scientific study which found that MON863 is toxic to animals. He also said that the Irish government records of GM animal feed imports for 2006 have been irretrievably lost due to the "computer database failure", making traceability and liability impossible in the event of related animal or human health problems.

Fine Gael Agriculture and Food spokesperson Denis Naughten TD said "One third of animal feed consignments imported into Ireland in 2005 were mislabelled as containing no genetically modified material when, in fact, the opposite was the case. Green Party Leader Trevor Sargent, TD said "Under this Minister's watch, the vast majority of feed imports are genetically modified. This shows just how little she cares for the economic future of conventional and organic growers, for the Irish food industry's image on the world market, for consumers and for Ireland's ecosystems".

This total breakdown of our food safety and traceability system is a clear breach of EU regulation 1829/2003. It proves once again that the existing mechanisms of EU legislation concerning GMOs are not effective and can not protect consumers, farmers, companies and the environment from unwanted GE contamination.

Segregated system needed for GM-free imports

The unloading facilities in Dublin Port don't include a dedicated system to segregate GM from conventional and organic food and feed imports, as specified by the Department of Agriculture's proposed rules "to ensure the co-existence" of GM products with conventional and organic agriculture.

The substantial quantities blown off the dockside into the Alexandra basin and the river Liffey probably also contaminate birds, fish, and seals around Dublin Bay, threatening the biodiversity of five Natura 2000 sites in the area.

Call for blockade of US maize shipments

Greenpeace International this morning requested the European Commission to take immediate steps to halt all maize and other food and feed shipments imported from the USA, until a rigorous comprehensive testing programme and traceability system is fully implemented in compliance with EU law.

At today's European Commission daily press conference at lunchtime, an EC spokesperson said they are concerned that an illegal maize variety has entered the EU. They said the Dutch authorities need to act and put the illegal maize on the Rapid Alert System, so that other EU member states can trace it and take it off the market. The Commission spokesperson also said that although Herculex RW maize is indeed illegal in the EU, it received a positive opinion from EFSA on 4 April) and EU member states still have an opportunity to discuss this opinion on 8 June at a meeting of the EC Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health. The spokesperson said the EC had no plans to halt all US maize shipments. Greenpeace spokesperson Geert Ritsema said "This is typical for the European Commission's approach to GM contamination scandals so far. They do not go beyond crisis management. They deal with each crisis separately but do not take any meaningful measures to prevent future contamination."

Greenpeace and GM-free Ireland have also requested the Irish Government to explain why the illegal maize was not intercepted in Dublin, to clarify what was unloaded here, and to test the latter for the presence of illegal and toxic GM maize varieties. They have also called for the EU and Irish Government to ban the importation of Monsanto's toxic MON863 maize from being sold on to farmers and contaminating the food chain.

At a media briefing in Brussels today, a Greenpeace spokesperson said "We hold the authorities in all EU member states and the European Commission responsible for protecting EU citizens against the risks of illegal imports of GMOs. They have this obligation under EU law (labelling and traceability regulation 1829/2003). In the case of the Pakrac the controls have failed miserably: both the Irish and the Dutch authorities did not detect the cargo as containing illegal GM maize. It was Greenpeace who found out by doing a random sampling of one ship. The first time we tested a maize ship since many years, we

immediately found illegal GMO maize. This clearly indicates that the EU's official traceability and testing system for GMOs is patently unable to detect illegal GMO varieties on time. Therefore Greenpeace demands a blockade of all US maize shipments and other US shipments that are at risk of being contaminated with illegal GMOs until an extensive testing programme is in place to protect consumers, farmers and the environment against the risks of illegal maize imports."

Farmers to phase out use of GM animal feed

GM-free Ireland is currently engaged in discussions with H & R Hall (Ireland's largest importer and supplier of animal feed ingredients), the Kepak Group (which controls over 60% of the market for Irish beef), the Irish Creamery and Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA) and the Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Association (ICSA) to explore the feasibility of supplying farmers with certified non-GMO animal feed as soon as possible.

Michael O'Callaghan of GM-free Ireland said "the routine use of GM fodder has already damaged the reputation of Irish meat and dairy produce, which would otherwise be considered the best in Europe. We cannot afford to further damage our food exports by continuing to allow illegal and/or toxic varieties of GM animal feed to be sold here, much less the current government's plans 'to ensure the co-existence' of GM crops with conventional and organic farming."

In the UK (Tesco, Sainsburys, Marks & Spencer), France (Carrefour), Italy (Coop Italia), and Switzerland (Migros, Coop) have recently extended their previous ban on GMO ingredients by prohibiting the sale of meat and dairy produce from livestock fed on GM ingredients in their own-brand food products. This follows on an early ban on GM foods by Europe's 60 largest food brands and food retailers in 2005.

Call for reform of the European Food Safety Authority

Greenpeace has urged European Health and Consumer Affairs Commissioner, Marcos Kyprianou, and all European member states to apply the Precautionary Principle by prohibiting the further importation and cultivation of MON863 maize and all other GMOs, since all products on the market suffer from the same lack of proper risk assessment.

The European Environmental Bureau, which serves as an umbrella group for Europe's main Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations, has demanded a radical reform of the European Commission's GMO authorisation procedure, and a review of all risk assessments carried out so far on GM animal feed, food and crops.

Irish General Election

GM-free Ireland spokesperson Michael O'Callaghan said his organisation will soon publish a list of all candidates in the forthcoming General Election, with their response — or lack thereof — to a letter sent to them before Christmas requesting them to state if they support the call for a total ban on GMO seeds and crops in Ireland. He concluded "The General Election provides an opportunity for voters to replace a government that broke its previous pre-election pledge never to allow GM food and crops in this country. Contaminating our food chain with dangerous GM feed and food is unacceptable. We are working with farmers and food exporters to phase out the use of GM animal feed, and urge the government to act before GM crops are legalised for cultivation here. The best thing for the future of our food, farming and tourism sectors is to follow the lead of the nine other EU member states and 236 Regional Governments and declare the whole island of Ireland as a GMO-free zone."

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Photos are available for download at <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/pakrac>

Notes for editors will be available tonight at <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/pakrac>