



greenpeace international  
Ottho Heldringstraat 5, 1066 AZ Amsterdam, Netherlands  
t +31 20 514 8150 f +31 20 514 8151  
www.greenpeace.org

Open letter to the Delegates of the „World Food Business Summit“

Hilton Hotel  
Rome

16/6/04

### **Food industry policy and practise on GE food labelling and provision of GE Free food**

Dear Chairman Mr. Isdell, dear delegates,

The issue of GE food and feed is probably one of the hottest topics in the food business in the last years. When the first Roundup Ready soybeans hit the market in 1996 the GE industry didn't stop promising or threatening that there is no way to stop the spread of GE into our food chain and that opposition towards this technology is useless.

But this issue also proved to be a demonstration of power of the informed consumer. Where customers were knowledgeable about the issue of GE food, there was a clear and strong rejection of these products. The food industry did understand the message. Sources for GE free qualities were found, or ingredients like soya were substituted with non-GE alternatives.

Today 8 years after the introduction of the first GE soybean to the food market, there still is hardly any product on the supermarket shelves in Europe that contains GE plant ingredients. But also in other countries like Australia, Brazil or China consumer resistance against GE food is strong and growing.

Unfortunately millions of consumers around the world are still being denied the right to know when GE crops are being used in their food. In many countries including the US and Canada, two of the four countries that commercially grow GE food crops, the food industry are actively blocking the introduction of labelling legislation thereby denying their customers the right to know what is in their food, despite many consumer surveys regularly showing a 70-80% demand for GE labelling.

The Trade Association '*Grocery Manufacturers of America (GMA)*'<sup>^</sup>, of which many of the companies attending this conference are members, have been running an active campaign against labelling of GE Food throughout the US. We demand that the GMA and its members stop being dishonest about GE labelling.

We specifically challenge the GMA members to state clearly their willingness and their ability to implement labelling of GE food if it was the will of a public vote.

In Europe the majority of companies in the food industry have in fact taken some action to ensure that their products are GE Free in-line with consumer demand and scientific concern, however there remain many questions about which countries and for which products the GE Free policy applies and about the use of GE crops as animal feed.

Greenpeace is currently compiling results of a European-wide survey of the current GE policies and practises of the food industry in the EU. That is scheduled to be printed at the end of June. (We had hoped to bring the printing forward to have it available for the Food Business Summit but we have decided to allow more time for more companies to reply – copies will be available at the end of June on our website and circulated)

Greenpeace demands from the international Food Industry:

- Listen to the voices of consumers from all across Europe who are demanding GE free food, feed and fields
- Provide GE Free Food in all of your markets
- Implement EU style labelling legislation in all of their markets. Voluntarily!
- Implement Fair Trade principles and GE Free Ecological Agricultural standards

Note:

We specifically condemn the members of the Grocery Manufacturers of America (GMA) for their campaign in the US against labelling of GE Food. It is being basically dishonest when your companies 'know' that GE labelling can be introduced onto your packaging with a minimum of fuss or cost within 12-18 months or less of you making the decision to do it. Yet you are loudly giving testimony to every local debate and national committee about how difficult and how expensive and how impractical GE Labelling is to do in reality.... that's dishonest.

Fair Trade principles and GE Free Ecological Agricultural

While our focus today is their GE food policy Greenpeace uses this opportunity to call these companies attention also to their wider social and environmental impact. These companies should implement Fair Trade principles and GE Free Ecological Agricultural standards in an effort to reduce the negative social and environmental problems inherent in their current business practice.

Federica Ferrario

GE Campaigner Greenpeace