

Genetically Engineered Wheat Rejected Globally, Groups Remind Monsanto

Tri-national Statement Responds to Industry Pledge to Commercialize GE Wheat

For Immediate Release

Ottawa, Montréal, Washington, Canberra – Monday, June 1, 2009. Farmers, consumers and civil society organizations in Australia, Canada and the U.S. released a joint statement confirming their collective commitment to stop commercialization of genetically engineered (GE) wheat. (1) In 2004, global pressure prevented biotechnology company Monsanto from pushing GE wheat onto an unwilling market.

The statement “Definitive Global Rejection of Genetically Engineered Wheat” was released to counter a May 14 “Wheat Commercialization Statement” released by industry lobby groups in the three countries. (2) The industry pledged to “work toward the goal of synchronized commercialization of biotech traits in our wheat crops.” Today’s statement was released by 15 groups in Australia, Canada and the US, including the National Farmers Union, the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, the National Family Farm Coalition in the US and the Network of Concerned Farmers in Australia, and counters the six stated industry arguments in favour of GE wheat.

“GE wheat is a potential disaster of huge proportions,” said Terry Bohem, Vice President of the National Farmers Union in Canada, “We refuse to allow Monsanto and industry groups to restart any campaign to commercialize GE wheat.”

The group statement centers on the pledge: “In light of our existing experience with genetic engineering, and recognizing the global consumer rejection of genetically engineered wheat, we restate our definitive opposition to GE wheat and our commitment to stopping the commercialization of GE traits in our wheat crops.”

“Genetic engineering for wheat would be a calamity for all wheat farmers. Consumers across the world have already rejected the idea of GE wheat but corporations are intent on controlling this crop through their gene patents,” said Julie Newman of the Network of Concerned Farmers in Australia.

In 2004, Monsanto withdrew its applications for approval for GE wheat in Canada and the U.S., due to intensive consumer and farmer protest. The wheat is engineered to be tolerant to Monsanto’s brand-name herbicide Roundup.

“Monsanto needs to accept defeat.” said Lucy Sharratt, Coordinator of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, a coalition of 18 groups. “The industry groups in our three countries are promising to force this product on all of us but today we reiterate our pledge to stop them.”

“Monsanto and industry groups in our countries need to abandon their agenda

of forcing GE wheat onto a market that doesn't want or need it," said Katherine Ozer, Executive Director of the National Family Farm Coalition in the U.S.

The groups signing the statement have also asked groups around the world to sign on at www.cban.ca/wheat before August 31, 2009.

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or See www.cban.ca/GEwheat or www.cban.ca/press

(1) The "Definitive Global Rejection of Genetically Engineered Wheat" statement was signed by the following organizations: National Farmers Union, Canada; Canadian Biotechnology Action Network; Union Paysanne, Canada; Union Biologique Paysanne, Canada; Réseau Québécois contre les OGM, Canada; Saskatchewan Organic Directorate, Canada; Network of Concerned Farmers, Australia; Organic Federation of Australia; Biological Farmers of Australia; Greenpeace; Gene Ethics, Australia; National Family Farm Coalition, USA; Western Organization of Resource Councils, USA; Center for Food Safety, USA; Organic Consumers Association, USA.

(2) The industry "Wheat Commercialization Statement" can be viewed at www.cban.ca/wheat