

Say “No” to GM food in Tesco

Tesco have broken their promise to phase out GM animal feed. In 1999 Tesco stated the company was aiming for the "complete elimination of GM ingredients from animal feed" and repeated this in 2001.

But in April 2013 Tesco reversed this policy. It claimed their suppliers have found it increasingly difficult to guarantee that the feed they use is entirely GM-free. That there isn't enough non-GM feed available.

This is misleading. Non-GM supplies are available. The area of non-GM soya grown in Brazil in 2012/13 was the same as previous years.

Most non-GM soya is grown in Brazil. About a quarter of the total crop is non-GM, but less than 60% of that is certified. Much more non-GM soya could be available for the market. Long-term contracts for certified non-GM soya for animal feed would enable producers to cover the cost of certification. This is what GM Freeze has urged supermarkets to offer for years.

Major European supermarket chains, including Carrefour, have successful labelled lines of non-GM fed animal products. China is moving to secure non-GM soya imports which proves that large quantities of non-GM are on the market.

If UK supermarkets place long term contracts for non-GM, normal market forces will ensure that in future more non-GM is grown and sold.

There is no satisfactory explanation for the change in feed policy by Tesco and other UK supermarkets.

Tesco also claim GM soya will not have any impact on the quality or tastes of the food and,

"most importantly, it will have no effect on health. As a food retailer, nothing is more important to us than the safety of the food we sell. Genetic modification affects only the plant which undergoes the process....Put simply, the meat from a chicken fed on modified soya feed is no different to the meat of a chicken fed on non-GM feed."

This claim is seriously misleading. Tesco are ignoring the 2012 long term study (2 years) of rats eating GM maize, by Seralini et al which showed substantially higher death rates, cancers and liver and kidney damage. Most studies only involve a 90 day period, which does not provide a realistic study of possible long term effects in people.

They are also ignoring much earlier work quoted by Peter Melchett talking in Fakenham in 2003:

(i) A scientific paper looked at 10 trials on the effect of GM food on the gut of animals. Five done by researchers very closely allied with GM companies found no problems. The other 5, done much more independently, all found evidence of some impact on the lining of the gut in the animals concerned.

(ii) The 'Flavor Savr' tomato, the very first GM crop that was ever grown was on sale in the UK for some time in tomato paste. It's gone now. Research in an unpublished paper, showed that that tomato was having some unclear impact on the gut of animals that ate it

(ii) Research commissioned by the Food Standard Agency in this country, has looked at what happens to GMOs what you eat them. We are always told by the scientists involved in GM research that you do not have to worry about eating GM crops because it will all be destroyed by the stomach acids. At Newcastle they looked at whether the genetically modified DNA was destroyed when it went through the small intestine of human beings, using people with colostomy bags, They found that whole pieces of DNA had survived the passage though the human stomach and the small intestine. So there was plenty of opportunity for that DNA to transfer to the other organisms in the human gut.

A 2010 poll showed 89% of Tesco customers want GM-fed meat, milk and eggs to be labeled, and 72% said they would be willing to pay more for foods produced without GM feed. The move toward GM feed contradicts the promises the company made to its customers to get rid of GM feed and to ensure its supply chain is sustainable, Tesco also continues to ignore the wish its customers have for labels.

Tesco is now backing GM soya production in South America, where it is grown in huge monocultures sprayed frequently with Roundup to the detriment of people and ecosystems there. Things are likely to get worse as weeds resistant to Roundup continue to spread.”

What You Can Do - Use your power as a customer.

Ask Tesco to reverse its policy, to label all foods accurately and to work to eliminate GM food in its products. Write to Philip Clarke, Chief Executive Tesco, New Tesco House, Delamare Road, Cheshunt, Herts, EN8 9SL