

# Greens NSW

## Genetic Engineering in Food and Crops Policy



Revised November 2006

### Principles

The Greens NSW believe:

1. The precautionary principle (as defined in the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991) to be enshrined in legislation;
2. We should oppose the patenting of life forms oppose the recognition of Australia's and other countries' patents of life forms and other intellectual property rights. Life forms cannot be regarded as inventions but expropriations from life. Many patents are unethical; they destroy livelihoods, contravene basic human rights, create unnecessary suffering in animals or are otherwise contrary to public order and morality. Many patents involve acts of plagiarism of indigenous knowledge and biopiracy of plants and animals bred and used by local communities for millennia;
3. We should support development, within the public and private arenas, including educational institutions, of sustainable, organic and ecologically balanced agriculture;
4. The community should be provided with adequate information to allow individuals to make an informed choice about the food they consume;
5. The control of agricultural policy on this issue should be removed from the influence of the biotechnology industry;
6. Responsive regulatory actions against genetic engineering (GE) are required at a state and local government level instead of deferring to federal authorities and standards;
7. Local governments must be kept aware of the issues; and
8. A shift in agricultural research from biotechnology to a greater emphasis on environmentally sustainable methods of farming and organic practices is desirable.

### Goals

Greens NSW support and will work to:

#### **Moratorium on further Genetically Engineered Organism (GEO) releases**

9. Extend the moratorium in place in NSW for commercial food crops for consumption to include fibre and animal feed products and to remain in force until it is proved that genetically engineered crops can be

contained and that they are safe for consumption by humans and animals;

10. Remove from NSW of all GEOs immediately with removal and destruction of both deliberately released GEOs and those crops and natural communities found to be genetically contaminated.
11. Ensure the Gene Technology Regulation Act 2000 is interpreted in accordance with the following principles:
  - 11.1 If there is conflict between the public interest and the private interests of any person, the public interest prevails
  - 11.2 In recognition of the fact that there are pre-existing trial crops in NSW, all reasonable steps shall be taken to prevent risks to human health and the health of the environment
  - 11.3 GE material must be destroyed and should not enter the food supply chain under any circumstances;

### **GE free zones**

12. Amend of the Gene Technology Act 2000 to permit any area of NSW to be declared a GE-free zone, either on a submission from the Minister for Health, the Minister for Environment, the Minister for Primary Industries & Natural Resources or by resolution from a local council to declare a GE-free zone;
13. Ensure that strict regulations are put in place to prevent contamination of organic and GE free crops in areas where GE trial crops are permitted with any contamination to be removed at the joint expense of the GEO-release applicant and patent holder;
14. Amend the NSW Act to provide that licences may not be granted for a period exceeding 3 years;
15. Amend the NSW Act to place the following constraints on the discretion of the Regulator to issue GEO licences:
  - 15.1 If the proposed dealing may pose significant risks to the health and safety of people or to the environment, then the Regulator may not grant a licence for the dealing without the concurrence of the Technical Advisory Committee, the Ethics Committee and the Community Consultative Committee
  - 15.2 The Regulator may not grant a licence permitting a release of a GEO into the environment if the Technical Advisory Committee advises that there is a potential risk that the GEO will contaminate beyond the area the subject of the licence
  - 15.3 A licence may not be granted to an applicant who has been convicted of a serious offence concerning human health or the environment
  - 15.4 A licence may not be granted to a corporation, if the corporation is controlled by a person who has been convicted of a serious offence concerning human health or

the environment, or if such a person is involved in the management of the corporation.

16. Encourage local councils to supply GE free food for all services run by local councils including meals-on-wheels and child-care centres;

### **Mandatory labelling of all GE foods**

17. Establish mandatory, comprehensive, clear and truthful labelling at every level of all food products containing GE ingredients or their derivatives as well as labelling of oils, starches, sugars and other highly processed foods should be implemented.
18. Implement labelling of unpackaged foods in take-away outlets, restaurants and airlines.

### **Power of veto on GEO releases**

19. Ensure NSW retains a retrospective veto power on the general release of all GEOs with the NSW Government having the right to revoke all existing contracts and agreements to grow GE crops on both public and private land;
20. Local Government must be enabled to utilise a similar veto power with local communities, through a consultation mechanism, to have the power to comprehensively reject GEOs where they are seen as incompatible with the general public's wishes, economic interests or environmental concerns;
21. Require the Gene Technology Regulator, in assessing a licence application for the release of a GEO into the environment, to take into account the impact such a release could have on the ability of growers of GE-free produce to guarantee the purity of their product from GE contamination;
22. Require each GE licence holder to be adequately insured to protect human health, the environment and non-GE markets;
23. Require the Gene Technology Regulator to consult with the Ethics Committee and the Community Consultative Committee in respect of each licence application submitted to it;
24. Resolve issues of past genetic contamination;
25. Establish an inventory of the exact sites of all past and current GEO releases for trial or commercial purposes in NSW in a public-friendly format. Support DNA tests within 10km radii of past GEO release sites to establish the degree, if any, of genetic contamination of surrounding crops and natural communities with the testing zone to be extended if any contamination is detected;
26. Notify all residents and producers within a 10 kilometre radius of all such GEO releases. Notification to include past release dates, nature of trials or commercial releases, and existing genetic contamination status;

27. Work towards establishing a compensation fund sourced from biotechnology proponents for farmers who are obligated to destroy GE or GE contaminated crops or aquaculture products;

### **Ban intellectual copyright on GEOs and other living organisms**

28. Ban patents including no recognition of other countries' patents on living organisms, organs, cell lines, cells, genes and proteins, whether naturally occurring, genetically altered or otherwise manipulated;

### **Research**

29. Support joint Federal and State Government funding for independent scientific research to investigate the potential risks of GE to human and animal health and environment, where such research is not available in the world (this research to focus on the potential outcrossing between GE and non-GE commercial or wild relatives, horizontal gene transfer between unrelated organisms, bioaccumulation within natural systems and the potential for adverse ecological interactions);
30. Ensure the Gene Technology regulator does not issue licences whilst segregation studies are under way;
31. Instigate a comprehensive, independent public inquiry into the future of agriculture and aquaculture to evaluate the implications of widespread adoption of GE production for food security for both people and the natural environment, taking account of the full range of scientific findings, socio-economic and ethical issues, ecological sustainability, and socially inequitable practices of global food distribution;

### **Support for development of organic production and ecologically sustainable land use and food production**

32. Provide practical and financial support to farmers undertaking conversion to organic production, or those interested in conducting conversion studies;
33. Establish tax incentives for organic farmers in recognition of the benefits that sustainable production and land management provide to society as a whole;
34. Promote and provide information on sustainable food production to both primary and high schools for inclusion in a relevant course of study;
35. Promote the incorporation of sustainable food production course components in Agricultural Studies and Science courses and as options within TAFE and tertiary studies.