

No Safety Assessment of GE Corn by Health Canada

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Sharratt<info@cban.ca><p>Canada Ignores International Food Safety Guidelines</p><p>Ottawa, Wednesday July 29, 2009. Today the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN) demanded that the federal government immediately withdraw authorization for SmartStax, a genetically engineered (GE), eight-trait corn, until Health Canada undertakes exhaustive and independent tests.</p><p>CBAN made the demand after learning that Health Canada has not assessed the human health safety of SmartStax. Safety assessment of multi-trait crops is part of the guidelines adopted by the Codex Alimentarius, a United Nations body that develops food safety guidelines recognized by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and used to settle trade disputes.</p><p>SmartStax, a multi-herbicide tolerant and multi-insecticide-producing corn developed by Monsanto and Dow Agro Sciences, has been authorized by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency but not by Health Canada.</p><p>Health Canada did not conduct or require any testing for this new eight-trait GE corn and did not even officially authorize it for release into the food system, said Lucy Sharratt, CBAN's Coordinator. Health Canada has entirely abdicated its responsibility and just shrugged off the potential health risk of eating eight GE traits in one cornflake.</p><p>Combining many GE traits together can give rise to unintended effects which could adversely affect health, such as creating new allergies or toxins, or exacerbating existing allergies, said Dr. Michael Hansen of the Consumers Union in the US, a leading global expert on the potential health risks of GE.</p><p>This GE crop should have gone through a new safety assessment, as recommended by Codex in its Guidelines for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from Recombinant-DNA Plants adopted in 2003. Codex standards and guidelines are used to settle trade disputes and the lack of a new safety assessment for this GE corn means that other countries could reject SmartStax without running afoul of WTO rules, said Dr. Hansen.</p><p>Canada is ignoring the Codex guideline to test stacked-trait plants, a guideline our government negotiated. Our standards should be at least as high as Codex, if not higher, said Sharratt. This scandal exposes the deepest and most dangerous nonchalance of Health Canada toward the risks of GE foods and the safety of Canadians,</p><p>Health Canada is protecting the interests of biotechnology corporations rather than the health of Canadians, said Dr. Shiv Chopra, a former scientific evaluator for Health Canada and whistleblower in Health Canada's review of Monsanto's recombinant bovine growth hormone.</p><p>Releasing SmartStax without evaluating safety, just a day after the release of the blistering report on the listeriosis crisis, confirms deep structural problems and government mismanagement of GE foods and crops, said Éric Darier from Greenpeace Canada.</p><p>-30-
</p><p>For more information: Lucy Sharratt, Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, 613 241 2267 ext. 6; Michael Hansen, Consumers Union, Cell 917 774 3801, 914 378 2452; Dr. Shiv Chopra, 613 692 6104; Eric Darier cell. 514 605-6497.</p>