

GM Flax Contamination from Canada Soars to 28 Countries

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Sharratt<info@cban.ca><p>But Canadian farmers still have no answers</p><p>Ottawa, Monday, October 5, 2009? 28 countries, including more European countries as well as Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Thailand, have now been affected by contamination from genetically modified (GM) flax in Canadian exports since contamination was first reported on September 8.</p><p>Mereweeks are left before farmers in Canada finish harvesting their flax and yet farmers still don't know the source or full extent of the GM contamination-- and it could be weeks before authorities in Canada confirm any details. Flax prices remain depressed.</p><p>GM flax is not approved for human consumption in the following 28 countries where contamination has now crept: Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Croatia, Czech Republic, Spain, Denmark, Estonia, Norway, Finland, France, Greece, Romania, Portugal, Iceland, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Mauritius. Companies are removing products from the market as the GM flax has been found in cereals, bakery products, bakery mixtures and nut/seed products. 9 GM flax contamination notices have been filed so far through the European Commission's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed.</p><p>European authorities have named the source of contamination as the GM flax "Triffid", which was developed in Canada but was deregistered in 2001 and has been illegal to sell since that time. While there is a test for the Triffid flax available from the company Genetic ID, the Flax Council of Canada is delaying confirmation as it waits for the Plant Biotechnology Institute in Saskatoon to develop a new test for Triffid.</p><p>It's been nearly a month since contamination was first found, but neither the Canadian government nor industry has come forward with any answers, said Stewart Wells, President of the National Farmers Union of Canada. The continued uncertainty and unanswered questions show the need for more strict regulation of GM crops in Canada.</p><p>Farmers face the threat of unwanted contamination from GM crops, even when the crops are not supposed to be grown, said Arnold Taylor, an organic flax grower and Chair of the Organic Agriculture Protection Fund of the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate. Someone's going to have to pay for testing our crops for contamination and any required clean-up. Who will be liable?</p><p>The Canadian government still refuses to consider market harm when they decide to approve GM crops. This obviously has to change immediately, said Lucy Sharratt, Coordinator of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network. The entire regulatory system needs urgent reform or we will see even more widespread market chaos.</p><p>Click here for background on GM flax.</p><p>Formore information: Stewart Wells, National Farmers Union of Canada, 306 773 6852 or cell: 306 741 7694; Arnold Taylor, Saskatchewan Organic Directorate, cell: 306 241 6126 or 306 252 2783; Lucy Sharratt, Coordinator, Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, cell 613 263 9511 or 613 241 2267 ext. 6.</p>