



Press release

greenpeace international

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## First contamination report reveals worldwide illegal spread of genetically engineered crops

### Greenpeace calls for urgent adoption of international biosafety standards

**Amsterdam, 8 March 2006** The first report into the extent to which genetically engineered organisms have 'leaked' into the environment - released today - reveals a disturbing picture of widespread contamination, illegal planting and negative agricultural side effects.

The report is a summary of incidents uncovered by the on-line Contamination Register (1) set up by Greenpeace and GeneWatch UK. It reveals a catalogue of highly disturbing incidents right across the world, including

- Pork meat from genetically engineered pigs being sold to consumers
- Ordinary crops being contaminated with GE crops containing pharmaceuticals
- Growing and international distribution of illegal antibiotic resistant Maize seeds
- Planting of outlawed GE crops which have been smuggled into countries
- Mixing of unapproved GE crops in food, including shipments of food aid
- Inadvertent mixing of different GE strains even in high profile scientific field trials

The report reveals 113 such cases worldwide, involving 39 countries - twice as many countries as are officially allowed to grow GM crops since they were first commercialised in 1996. Worryingly, the frequency of these cases is increasing, with 11 countries affected in 2005 alone. Contamination has even been found in countries conducting supposedly "carefully controlled" high-profile farm-scale evaluations, such as the UK.

"This may well only be the tip of the iceberg, as there is no official global or national contamination register so far," said Dr. Sue Mayer of GeneWatch UK, who leads the team of investigators. "Most incidents of contamination are actually kept as confidential business information by companies as well as public authorities."

Greenpeace is calling for a mandatory international register of /all/ such events to be set up, along with the adoption of minimum standards of identification and labelling of all international shipments of GE crops. "Without such biosafety standards, the global community will have no chance of tracing and recalling dangerous GMOs, should this become necessary," said Benedikt Haerlin of Greenpeace International's Biosafety Protocol delegation.

The publication of the report comes only days before the latest meeting of the 132 countries who have signed the Biosafety Protocol (2), which is to establish standards of safety and information of GE crops in global food and feed trade. At their last meeting an imminent agreement was blocked by only two member states, Brazil and New Zealand. They were backed by the major GE exporting countries USA, Argentina and Canada, who are no members of the Protocol and want to restrict required identification to a meaningless note that a shipment "may contain" GE.

"All of these countries have national legislation to protect themselves from illegal GE imports. Still they want to deny the same rights and level of information to less developed countries, with no national Biosafety-laws and means to enforce them," concluded Haerlin. "Do they really want such unethical double standards and create dumping grounds for unidentified and illegal GE imports? We hope that Brazil, who will be hosting this meeting, will not betray the developing countries and cater to large agro-businesses at the expense of the environment."

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Notes to editors:

1. The GM Contamination Register is online at <http://www.gmcontaminationregister.org>. The full report is also available at [www.greenpeace.org/bsp2006](http://www.greenpeace.org/bsp2006)
2. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety under the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty to establish minimum international safety standards for genetically engineered organisms ratified by 132 states. <http://www.biodiv.org/biosafety>
3. An overview of national legislation on imports and labelling of GE organisms world wide including a map of potential GE dumping grounds as well as import and export figures is available online at <http://www.greenpeace.org/bsp2006>