

South Africans support International GM Opposition Day

We want the right to choose safe food now!

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[African Centre for Biosafety](http://www.biosafetyafrica.net/) - <http://www.biosafetyafrica.net/>

[Earthlife Africa](http://www.earthlife.org.za/) - <http://www.earthlife.org.za/>

Earthlife Africa (ELA) and the African Centre for Biosafety (ACB) are joining an international day of action on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) on Saturday the 8th of April, in demanding that genetically modified food for sale in South Africa is labelled as such. More than 1200 sister actions and events will take place in over 40 countries as world citizens demonstrate continuing global opposition to genetically modified foods and crops.

Currently, South Africa's labelling regulations do not require the mandatory labelling of GM foodstuff, thereby denying consumers the right to know what they are eating and to avoid GM food if they so wish.

The ACB has discovered that South African agribusiness, and the National Department of Agriculture have put in place extensive Identity Preservation Systems (IPS) to enable the segregation of non- GM food from GM food to secure export markets. These systems are so sophisticated that they can even separate individual GM varieties from each other.

"This indicates that food producers use double standards - a GM free one for the export market and contamination of our foodstuff with GMOs for the domestic market. We find this deeply reprehensible", said Vanessa Black from Earthlife Africa (eThekweni branch).

Last year researchers led by Prof. Chris Viljoen at the University of the Free State carried out random testing of 58 food products found on our supermarket shelves. They found that 44 of these contained GM material including many of our maize meal brands, as well as several organic food products.

The ACB's findings and a new global agreement on biosafety indicate that this trend can easily be reversed if there is the political will to do so.

Last month, 132 countries met in Brazil and thrashed out an international agreement under the United Nations' Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. In terms of this new article of international law, South Africa will need to segregate GM crops starting at their farm of origin and provide detailed labelling if we want to export agricultural products.

Many consumers are concerned about eating GM foods. There is mounting evidence that GM foods can affect health. Research animals fed with GM foods have developed

bleeding stomachs, excessive cell growth, inflammation in lung tissue, problems with organ development, increased sterility and impaired immune response. The biotech industry's claims that no one has been hurt by GM foods are misleading, since human health impacts are not being monitored. The only human clinical trial with GM foods showed that modified genes from soy transfer into intestinal bacteria.

The research by ACB explodes the myth that the mandatory labelling of GM foods will drive up food prices. Food manufacturers are simply riding the bandwagon in claiming that it is too costly and impossible to source GM free foods because crops aren't being segregated. Clearly it is possible to both label foods and provide GM free foods to consumers!