

GM Sweet Corn in Canada

Information for Action

July 2014

Genetically modified (GM, also called genetically engineered) sweet corn is being sold in some grocery stores, roadside stands and farmers markets across Canada.

GM foods are not labeled, and there are no public statistics to tell us how much GM sweet corn is being grown in Canada.

Field Corn, Sweet Corn and Popcorn

Sweet corn has more sugar and less starch than varieties of field (grain) corn, which are used for animal feed, processed food ingredients and biofuel.

1. **Sweet Corn:** For over a decade, Syngenta sold some GM sweet corn in Canada but in 2012 Monsanto also started selling GM sweet corn for the first time.
2. **Field Corn:** According to the industry, over 80% of field (grain) corn (for processed food ingredients, animal feed, and biofuels) in Canada is GM.
3. **Popcorn:** There are no GM popcorn varieties on the market.

Certified organic sweet corn is non-GM sweet corn. Organic farming prohibits the use of GM seeds and synthetic pesticides, such as neonicotinoids.



GM sweet corn

Any colour sweet corn could be GM: There are some GM varieties of yellow, white and two-colour (bicolour) sweet corn on the market.

The GM sweet corn on the market is genetically modified to be toxic to insects (insect resistant) or to be tolerant to brand name herbicides (herbicide tolerant). Most GM sweet corn has both of these GM traits together.

Monsanto's GM Sweet Corn

Monsanto sells what it calls "Seminis Performance Series" sweet corn (Seminis is the name of the vegetable-seed company that Monsanto now owns).

Monsanto has put GM traits into three varieties (hybrids) of sweet corn, and now markets GM versions of "Obsession" "Passion" and "Temptation" sweet corn varieties. The GM versions are called "Obsession II", "Passion II" and "Temptation II".

Monsanto's GM sweet corn is insect resistant – it produces three different Bt toxins to kill a wide range of insects – and it is also herbicide tolerant "Roundup Ready", to survive sprayings of the company's glyphosate "Roundup" herbicide.

Who is Monsanto? Monsanto is the largest seed company in the world, and the fifth largest agrochemical company. Monsanto sells the world's biggest selling herbicide, "Roundup." In 2012, Monsanto started selling GM sweet corn, through the vegetable seed company Seminis, which it bought in 2005.

Syngenta's GM Sweet Corn

The company Syngenta sells "Attribute" sweet corn varieties that are insect resistant, and "Attribute II" sweet corn varieties that are both insect resistant and tolerant to Bayer's Liberty glufosinate herbicide.

Who is Syngenta? Syngenta (Switzerland) is the world's largest agrochemical company, and the third largest seed company in the world after Monsanto and Dupont-Pioneer. Bayer CropScience owns the herbicide "Liberty", which is twinned with Syngenta's "LibertyLink" GM sweet corn seed.

Take Action

1. Ask your farmer at the roadside, farm gate, or farmers' market if they are selling GM sweet corn. You can even ask the Farmers' Market to check for you.
2. Write to the head office of your grocery store and ask them to remove GM sweet corn from their store. Tell them you don't want to buy it.
3. Buy organic sweet corn – organic farming prohibits GM seeds and synthetic pesticides.

Questions to ask your farmer:

Farmers may not be aware that they have bought GM sweet corn – seed catalogues do not always advertise seeds as "genetically modified".

You can use some of these questions to have a discussion with your farmer:

- Is your sweet corn genetically modified (also called genetically engineered)?
- Is it "insect protected"? (This is how insect resistant GM corn is described in seed catalogues)
- Is it herbicide tolerant? Did you use Roundup or Liberty on your corn? Is it called "LibertyLink" or "Roundup Ready"?
- Did you sign a Technology Stewardship Agreement for this sweet corn?
- What is the name of the variety of sweet corn you planted?
- What company makes this sweet corn?
- What company or seed dealer did you buy from?

Please share your results. If you get partial information from your farmer, or grocery store, and would like to check it or discuss it, please contact coordinator@cban.ca or call CBAN's Coordinator Lucy Sharratt 613 241 2267 ext 25.

Your actions as consumers are very influential.

Talk to your local farmer. Write to your grocery store.

