



Collaborative Campaigning for Food Sovereignty and Environmental Justice

Hon. Rona Ambrose
Minister of Health

November 14, 2013

RE: Is Health Canada reviewing a GE fish for approval?

Dear Minister Ambrose,

We are writing to ask you to provide an answer to the question:

Is Health Canada currently assessing a request to approve the genetically engineered (GE, also called genetically modified) Atlantic salmon for human consumption?

Health Canada does not maintain a list of all GE foods under review. It is imperative that the Canadian government provide this minimal level of transparency.

If approved, the GE Atlantic salmon would be the first GE food animal in the world. A decision to allow consumption of the world's first GE fish would be precedent setting and yet Health Canada's review is being kept entirely secret, with no public notification that a review is underway, no release of any related information about the GE fish, and no public or industry consultation. Additionally, if approved, the GE fish would land unlabeled on grocery store shelves.

AquaBounty has requested approval for human consumption of the fish in the U.S. based on a plan to produce all the GE fish eggs in Prince Edward Island, and grow-out the fish in Panama. We only know of this part of the company's plans for Canada because of the transparency in the U.S. process.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is currently reviewing a request to sell the processed GE fish into the U.S. market. The U.S. process has involved the release of substantial information on the GE fish request including a draft environmental assessment, as well as one public meeting and two public comment periods. The Canadian process provides none of this.

Unless you provide transparency on this one question, the first time Canadians will hear about the status of the GE fish will be after Health Canada makes its decision.

We ask you to provide a clear answer to this question, and to establish a system to inform the public about which GE products are under review for approval.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent and serious matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Sharratt', written in a cursive style.

Lucy Sharratt
Coordinator