



Collaborative Campaigning for Food Sovereignty and Environmental Justice

To: Hon. Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health

CC: Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Liberal Health Critic; Judy Wasylycia-Leis, NDP Health Critic, Luc Malo, Bloc Québécois Health Critic; Hon. Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food; Carole Swan, President, Canadian Food Inspection Agency; Johanne Beulieu, Head of Delegation to Codex, Director, Consumer Protection Division, Canadian Food Inspection Agency; Hon. Wayne Easter, Liberal Agriculture Critic; Alex Atamanenko, NDP Agriculture Critic; André Bellavance Bloc Québécois Agriculture Critic.

Friday, April 30, 2010

RE: Codex negotiations on GM/GE food labeling: Canada needs to support the recognition that each country can adopt different approaches regarding the labeling of GM/GE foods.

Dear Minister Aglukkaq,

In advance of next week's meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Labeling in Quebec City (May 3-7, 2010) we are writing to ask the Canadian Government to take a strong position in support of the ability of countries to label GM/GE foods.

We understand that Canada may oppose the position that Brazil has moved forward in the Codex negotiations (their amendment to Chapeau 2) which recognizes that "each country can adopt different approaches regarding labeling of foods obtained by GM/GE techniques". We ask you to instruct the Canadian delegation to the Codex meeting to support this amendment from Brazil.

Canadians feel strongly about this issue. As you are aware, consumer polls conducted in Canada (at least 9 polls since 1999) show that over 80% of Canadians want mandatory labeling of GE foods and food ingredients. This shows the strength of this public consensus.

We also ask that the Canadian delegation to the Codex meeting not reiterate the false argument that genetically engineered food is no different from food created via conventional plant breeding methods. This position is not supported by science and Codex Guidelines that specifically address the safety assessment of GE foods reinforce the fact that GM/GE is different.

Additionally, we ask that Canada, in its role as Chair of this meeting, reinforce the importance of the negotiations and continue to support the Codex process in this regard. We are reminded that in 2009, the meeting Chair, Paul Mayers from Health Canada, proposed a three-year halt to negotiations over GM/GE food labeling. We ask that such a proposal not be brought forward a second time but that the Chair support the future and successful conclusion of these negotiations.

We note that Health Canada has not published its position for public scrutiny and, unlike other governments, has not submitted written comments to the Codex meeting. This lack of transparency is not acceptable.

We ask the Canadian government to take all steps to support the ability of countries to label GM/GE foods and support progress in next week's negotiations, securing a future for this important process inside Codex.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Sharratt', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Lucy Sharratt
Coordinator