



NEW REPORT

GM Contamination in Canada:

The failure to contain living modified organisms – Incidents and impacts

The report details, for the first time in one place, all the known contamination and escape incidents in Canada that have occurred with genetically engineered (genetically modified or GM) crops and animals, and their impacts.

Once released into our environment, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) can be difficult or impossible to control or recall.

Human error, biology, pollinator and wind movement, extreme weather events, and other factors make GM contamination predictable.

GM contamination is the unwanted escape and spread of GMOs or genetic material from GMOs to non-GM plants, animals and foods. This dispersal can occur in a number of ways, including pollen spread and seed escape, and mixing of food and feed. GM contamination is living pollution that can self-replicate.

Such contamination can have negative environmental, social and economic impacts. So far, farmers have been the first to pay the price of GM contamination.

The diverse incidents of GM escape and contamination in Canada show that the risks cannot be managed by current government regulation nor through industry-developed best practices.

The federal government’s GMO review process does not assess the full risk of contamination occurring, nor the potential economic harm if such contamination happens. Farmers are not consulted before new GM crops are approved, and the economic risks are not assessed.

INCIDENTS

Since the first GM crop was commercialized in 1996, **there have been escape events in Canada with GM canola, flax, wheat and pigs.**



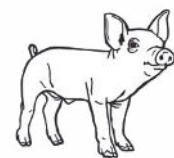
CANOLA



FLAX



WHEAT



PIGS

- Some escape events occurred with approved GMOs (canola and flax), and others with experimental GM plants and animals (wheat and pigs).
- Some were isolated incidents (wheat and pigs), while others are widespread or ongoing contamination cases (canola and flax).

Canadian farmers grow GM canola, corn, soy and white sugarbeet, as well as a small amount of GM alfalfa in the Eastern provinces. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change may soon approve the production of GM salmon.

IMPACTS

The economic consequences of GM contamination in Canada have included the temporary or permanent loss of export markets, lower crop prices in the short or long-term, the loss of access to grow a particular crop, and the loss of some farm-saved seed.

- Widespread **GM canola** contamination in Canada has meant that most organic farmers have lost the option of growing canola.
- **GM flax** contamination temporarily shut down export markets and lowered crop prices. It shifted Canada's flax market to a lower priced one.
- The discovery of a few **GM wheat** plants temporarily shut two export markets to Canadian wheat.
- **GM alfalfa** commercialization in Canada poses an immediate contamination threat to organic farming systems and other farm operations.

There are new and proposed GMOs that pose significant risks of escape and/or serious consequences if escape occurs. Furthermore, some proposed GMOs are specifically designed to be released into the wild, to deliberately cross with wild populations.

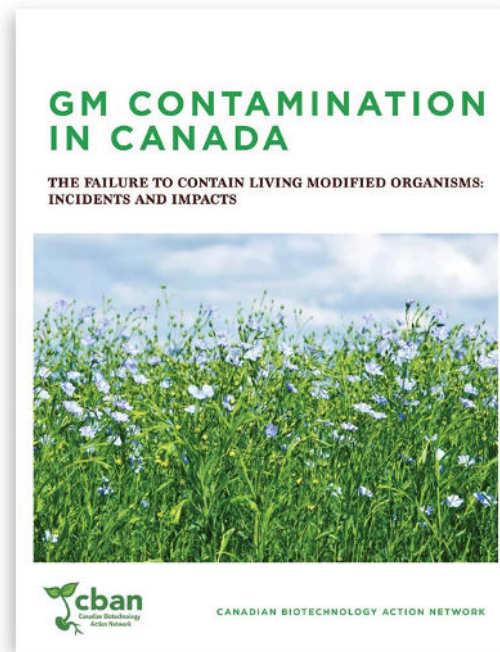
PREVENTING CONTAMINATION

The only way to prevent contamination from certain GMOs is to stop their release.

The Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN) and the Organic Agriculture Protection Fund (OAPF) or SaskOrganics are calling on the federal government to take three actions to help prevent future GM contamination:

1. Deregister GM alfalfa
2. Halt field trials of GM wheat
3. Assess the potential economic impacts of new GMOs before they are released

THE REPORT



This report is available online at www.cban.ca/ContaminationReport2019

The report is published by the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN) and the Organic Agriculture Protection Fund (OAPF) of SaskOrganics.

The Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN) brings together 16 groups to research, monitor and raise awareness about issues relating to genetic engineering in food and farming. CBAN members include farmer associations, environmental and social justice organizations, and regional coalitions of grassroots groups. CBAN is a project on the shared platform of Tides Canada. www.cban.ca

In October 2001, the Organic Agriculture Protection Fund was launched by SaskOrganics (then the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate) to pay the expenses for a Class Action lawsuit launched on behalf of all certified organic grain farmers in Saskatchewan against Monsanto and Aventis (Bayer), seeking compensation for damages caused by their genetically engineered canola and to get an injunction to prevent Monsanto from introducing GE wheat. <http://saskorganics.org/organic-agriculture-protection-fund/>

