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A critical investigation into unanswered questions from 20 years of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Canada

Background

January 27 2014

It's been 20 years since the Canadian government approved the first genetically modified (GM; also called genetically engineered or GE) crops and foods, but critical questions about their impacts on our health, our environment, and our economy remain unanswered.

History

In 1995, the federal government approved the first GM crops and foods:

- Four GM herbicide-tolerant canola varieties (largely grown in 1996).
- The first GM soybean, also herbicide-tolerant.
- Two GM tomatoes (for delayed ripening) and eight GM potatoes (all insect resistant from Monsanto) - all withdrawn from the market by the companies.
- GM sweet corn is the only GM vegetable currently grown in Canada.
- **Canada is now growing GM corn, canola, soy and white sugar beet.**

Next GM Crops

- Canada was the first country in the world (2012) to approve GM 2,4-D- and dicamba-tolerant soy and corn, to deal with glyphosate-resistant weeds created, in part, from widespread use of GM glyphosate-tolerant crops.
- Despite unanswered questions and ongoing controversy, the federal government could soon approve the first-ever GM apple (first GM fruit to be grown in Canada) and the first GM food animal in the world (a GM salmon).

Long-term concerns

Lack of Transparency

- There is no mandatory labelling of GM foods despite polls over 20 years that show over 80% of Canadians want labelling.
- Canada regulates GMOs in secret, with no public participation or consultation.
- The federal government does not assess the potential economic impacts.

Murky Regulations

- There are few long-term tests and no scientific consensus about the safety of GM foods.
- The government does not evaluate the long-term environmental impacts.
- The government implemented only 2 of the 58 recommendations for regulatory reform from the 2001 Royal Society of Canada's Expert Panel.

GMO Inquiry 2015

In 2015, the CBAN will release six research papers covering a wide range of unanswered questions about the impacts and risks of GMOs. These reports, and the ongoing participation of Canadians, will form the GMO Inquiry 2015.