

To:
Minister Mike Bernier - British Columbia
Minister David Eggen - Alberta
Minister Ian Wishart - Manitoba
Minister Don Morgan Saskatchewan
Minister Mitzie Hunter - Ontario
Minister Karen Lynn Casey - Nova Scotia
Minister Doug W Currie - Prince Edward Island
Minister Dale Kerby - Newfoundland & Labrador

March 5, 2017

RE: Product placement in the classroom in March 7 Live Webinar

Dear Ministers,

We are writing to alert you to the central place of product marketing in the March 7 webinar called “Trashing Food Waste with Technology” (1) offered by “Agriculture in the Classroom,” and to ask you to take steps to remove this product placement from the classroom.

The webinar and its accompanying “Live Webinar Pre-Activity” lesson plan function as advertisement for the genetically modified (GM or genetically engineered) apple called the “Arctic Apple,” which is marketed by the company Okanagan Specialty Fruits:

- The webinar speaker is a staff person in the marketing and communications team of Okanagan Specialty Fruits;
- The pre-webinar lesson plan suggests that students spend time on the company’s website: “Navigate the Arctic Apple website <http://arcticapples.com/> (individually or as a class).”
- The lesson plan then goes on to say, “Inform students that the Arctic Apple is an example of a genetically modified food that is available to eat! Explore the website to learn more about Arctic Apples – this will be the focus of the live stream event you and your class will be watching.” (It should also be noted that the GM apple is not “available to eat” in Canada. While the GM apple is approved for sale and will be test-marketed in the US this year, it is not yet in grocery stores in Canada.)

We argue that this activity is an inappropriate use of class time and ask you to:

1. Withdraw your support for this webinar in the classroom;
2. Advise teachers of these issues in relation to the webinar;
3. Communicate with the program “Agriculture in the Classroom” that product placement is not acceptable.

Education about food and farming is highly valuable and needs to be prominent in school curricula. It should be carefully constructed and delivered by teachers in our education

systems, not by corporate interests. All activities in schools should conform to provincial standards relating to advertising to children.

The program Agriculture in the Classroom names four of the world's top six seed and pesticide companies as foundational sponsors. Together these four corporations own 36% of the global commercial seed market and 54% of the global pesticide market. The role of such powerful companies raises broader questions about the ability of this program to provide unbiased activities and information to students.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Lucy Sharratt, Coordinator, Canadian Biotechnology Action Network

Leo Broderick, Vice-Chair, Council of Canadians

Sharon Labchuk, Earth Action PEI

Mary Boyd, MacKillop Centre for Social Justice, Prince Edward Island

Rachel Parent, Founder, Kids Right to Know

Contact: Lucy Sharratt, Coordinator, Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, Suite 206, 180 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1P5
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(1) The webinar advertisement and Live Webinar Pre-Activity can be seen here <http://www.aitc.ca/bc/news/119/56/Canadian-Agriculture-Literacy-Month> For archived materials relating to this webinar please see www.cban.ca/apple or contact Lucy Sharratt, Canadian Biotechnology Action Network.