

STEP 3: NOTIFICATION OF DECISIONS

The government posts lists of approved “Novel Foods” and “Plants with Novel Traits” that *include* GMOs but:

- Many of the products listed are not GMOs/also include non-GM products
- GMOs on the list are not clearly identified as GM
- Not all the approved GMOs on the list are on the market

There is no mandatory labelling of GM foods in Canada.

In 1999, government departments asked the Royal Society of Canada to form the *Expert Panel on the Future of Food Biotechnology* to assess the ability of Canadian regulation to deal with GMOs. In 2001, the Expert Panel made 53 recommendations for significant regulatory reform. Today, only 2 of these recommendations have been fully implemented.

“The Panel concludes that the lack of transparency in the current approval process, leading as it does to an inability to evaluate the scientific rigor of the assessment process, seriously compromises the confidence that society can place in the current regulatory framework used to assess potential risks to human, animal and environmental safety posed by GMOs.

“By intentionally excluding everything but a few very simple measurements, government has made the value judgment that market implications, religious beliefs, or the societal implications of concentration of power are not important.— E. Ann Clark, 2004

Are GM crops and foods well regulated?



For twenty years, the Canadian government has been approving genetically modified (GM, also called genetically engineered) crops and foods based on confidential information submitted by companies, and without any public consultation.

The regulatory system for genetically modified organisms (GMOs) has been widely criticized but has not changed significantly over two decades.

Canada's GMO Regulation is Not Transparent

- Regulators rely on science submitted by companies
- The information and data used to approve GMOs is “confidential” and not disclosed to the public or independent scientists
- There is no public participation and no consultation with farmers or consumers
- The process for evaluating the risks of GMOs is not clear
- The public is not automatically notified when a GM product is under review
- There is no clear list of approved GM foods and crops for the public
- There is no list of GM foods and crops on the market
- There is no mandatory labelling of GM foods

“ The goal of the regulatory framework is to minimize environmental risks while fostering competitiveness through timely introduction of biotechnology products to the marketplace.

— Government of Canada, 1993

No new laws or departments were created to regulate genetically modified organisms in Canada. Instead, regulation was divided between existing departments.

Canada regulates products of genetic modification under the broader categories of “Novel Foods” and “Plants with Novel Traits” which include products of other technologies such as conventional plant breeding.

Who regulates GMOs?

Health Canada: Safety assessment of GM foods for human consumption.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA): Environmental risk assessment of GM plants for growing; safety assessment of GM foods for animal feed; safety of GM field trials.

Environment Canada: Environmental risk assessment for GM animals, such as the GM fish.

MISSING TRANSPARENCY - STEP BY STEP

“ The decision-making process in general lacks transparency, and thus credibility.

– The Royal Society of Canada's *Expert Panel on the Future of Food Biotechnology*, 2001

STEP 1. NOTIFICATION OF ASSESSMENT

The government does not automatically notify the public when a company requests approval for a new GM food, crop or animal. Regulatory departments do not tell Canadians what products they are assessing, unless the companies requesting approval have already publicly released that information.

For the FULL REPORT see GMOinquiry.ca/regulation

STEP 2. SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Government scientific evaluators are responsible for deciding if GM foods are safe to eat and if GM crops and animals are safe to be released into the environment. The government does not assess their benefits or social and economic risks.

“ The claim that the assessment of biotechnology risks is ‘science-based’ is only as valid as the independence, objectivity and quality of the science employed.

— The Royal Society of Canada's *Expert Panel on the Future of Food Biotechnology*, 2001

CANADA CALLS ITS REGULATION OF GMOS “SCIENCE-BASED” BUT:

- **The government does not do any safety testing.**
- Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency rely on information submitted by the companies that want products approved.
- This information is not disclosed to the public or independent scientists because it is classified as “Confidential Business Information.”
- Most of the science behind GMO approvals is not peer-reviewed, public science.
- The only public document from the government is a short summary of each product approval decision (“Decision Document”) which is posted online at some point after the decision is made. It only vaguely describes how and why a product was approved.

THERE IS NO TRANSPARENCY.

The information and data behind product approvals is kept confidential. With the exception of one partial mechanism (called “Biotechnology Notices of Submission” - which relies on industry voluntary participation), the entire regulatory process happens without any information released to the public.

THERE IS NO PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OR CONSULTATION.

- The only non-governmental parties that have access to the regulatory process are the companies or institutions that want GMOs approved.
- The only invitation for public comment in the entire regulatory process (“Biotechnology Notices of Submission”) relies on voluntary participation from companies and provides no substantial information to comment on.

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