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# GMOS IN CANADA: AT A GLANCE

It has been twenty years since the first genetically modified (GM, also called genetically engineered) crops were approved in Canada.

## WHAT IS GROWN AND WHERE:

- » Until last year, only four GM crops have been grown in Canada: **corn, canola, soy and white sugar beet** (for sugar processing). In 2016, GM alfalfa was planted for the first time.
- » **Four GM crops** are 99% of the world's GM acreage: corn, canola, soy, and cotton.
- » **85% of the world's GM crops are genetically modified to be herbicide-tolerant.** The other GM traits on the market are insect-resistance and virus resistance along with a small amount of drought-resistant corn.
- » **Ten countries grow 98% of all the genetically modified crops in the world.** Most countries are not growing GM crops. Less than 1% of the world's farmers are growing GM crops.

## WHAT IS NEW IN CANADA:

- » In March 2016, a **GM potato** was approved. The potato is genetically engineered to have less asparagine, an amino acid that oxidizes into acrylamide (a probable carcinogen) at high-temperatures (e.g. frying).
- » A small amount of **GM alfalfa** seeds were sold for the first time in Canada in spring 2016.
- » A **GM salmon** (engineered to grow faster) is approved for eating (May 2016) and growing (Nov 2013) in Canada but it is not yet being produced anywhere in the world.
- » In March 2015, a **GM non-browning apple** was approved but it is not yet sold in Canada.
- » Monsanto's **GM dicamba-tolerant soy** and Dow's **2,4-D-tolerant corn and soy** are on the market this year.

### WHAT WE KNOW:

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In 2015, the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN) conducted a sweeping investigation of the impacts and risks of GM crops and foods, after 20 years in Canada.

Our *GMO Inquiry* [www.gmoenquiry.ca](http://www.gmoenquiry.ca) documented the following:

- » Herbicide sales in Canada have increased by 130% since GM crops have been introduced.
- » There are now five glyphosate-resistant weeds in Canada. Such weeds are now leading to more use of the older herbicides 2,4-D and dicamba.
- » Use of glyphosate on GM glyphosate-tolerant corn in the US corn-belt has reduced important monarch butterfly habitat, contributing to a population crisis.
- » There is no evidence that GM traits have increased crop yields.
- » The price of GM seeds is higher than non-GM seeds in Canada and around the world.
- » Farmers do not have more money in their pockets because of GM crops.
- » There is no scientific consensus on the question of GM food safety. The risks from eating GM foods have not been fully investigated: there is not enough science, little independent science, and few long-term tests.

### GOVERNMENT POLICY AND REGULATION:

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#### SAFETY

- » Health Canada does not conduct any of its own testing on GM foods but relies on industry-generated data, except where there is any relevant science that also happens to be in the scientific literature.
- » There is no tracing or monitoring (post-market surveillance) of GM foods on the market.

#### TRANSPARENCY

- » The regulatory processes for approving GMOs are not transparent.
- » Farmers and consumers are not consulted before GM crops, animals and foods are introduced onto the market.
- » Statistics Canada does not track how much of each GM crop is grown and where, outside of tracking GM corn and soy in Quebec and Ontario
- » There is no mandatory labelling of GM foods on the marketplace though 88% of Canadians want mandatory labelling ([www.cban.ca/2015poll](http://www.cban.ca/2015poll)) (over 80% is consistent over two decades).

#### ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- » The federal government does not assess the potential economic impacts of introducing new GM crops or animals.
- » There is no regulatory process for evaluating the long-term, system-wide environmental and economic impacts of using GM crops in Canada.

All statistics and analysis are discussed in the six reports of CBAN's *GMO Inquiry* [www.gmoenquiry.ca](http://www.gmoenquiry.ca)

**The Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN)** brings together 17 organizations 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 Tides Canada's shared platform. [www.cban.ca](http://www.cban.ca)