

Chapter 5: Local Resolutions

Introduction

As the movement to resist genetic engineering in the United States has progressed, more and more Americans have begun looking to the very local level to make the changes they seek on this issue. In recent years, resolutions opposing--and ordinances banning--GMOs from cities, towns, counties, and tribal lands have been passed in communities across the US.

These efforts have had a profound effect on increasing local awareness about the hazards of genetic engineering, garnering media attention to the issue, and sending a message nationally and internationally that here in the home country of many of the world's biggest genetic engineering corporations, a resistance movement is growing.

This chapter of the toolkit provides materials for people looking to pass town or county level resolutions to resist genetic engineering. These materials are largely drawn from efforts in the state of Vermont, where over 100 towns have passed resolutions opposing GMOs, and we thank the Institute for Social Ecology's Biotechnology Project for allowing GEAN to share these resources with you. There is also a fact sheet included about GE-free zones you can use to spread the word and build support for your campaign, and a petition you can use to help build support among local farmers for your resolution.

While this chapter focuses primarily on passing town and county resolutions, you can also opt to focus on an even more local level—you can pass resolutions in your school, your place of worship, or in clubs you belong to. This can help you quantify the support for your efforts in the community for policy makers, the media and others, and can be used to set tangible goals for your outreach and education work. For instance, you can set a goal to have 25 local organizations and businesses pass resolutions opposing GE in the coming year. Included in this chapter is a document activists in Hawaii are using to move local organizations and businesses to pass resolutions opposing genetic engineering that you can adopt for your own community.

If you are interested in passing a town, county, or local-level resolution on genetic engineering, please contact GEAN for strategy advice and media support at info@geaction.org or the Institute for Social Ecology's Biotechnology Project at biotech@social-ecology.org or by calling 802-454-7138.

How to bring the Town-to-Town Campaign to your town

By Brian Tokar, Institute for Social Ecology's Biotechnology Project

The Town-to-Town Campaign on Genetic Engineering has played a crucial role in invigorating local organizing and education around GMOs throughout Vermont. Some of the lessons of our campaign are applicable to any local situation, whereas other aspects would need to be modified considerably outside of those northern New England states that have an intact Town Meeting tradition. Even in New England, we've found that different rules and procedures apply in different states. In Maine, for example, the town selectboard needs to approve the resolution wording and hold a public hearing before a resolution can be added to the Town Meeting agenda. Thus the process takes quite a bit longer than in other states.

In states that don't have a tradition of Town Meeting, the process usually involves bringing a resolution to your town or city council or county commission. In some states, such as California, counties can hold referenda on issues, and proposed measures to counter the threat of GMOs can be taken directly to the voters. But in most locales, the only available procedure is to go through an elected governing body. Find out as much as you can beforehand about what kinds of issues have been addressed by your town or city council, and who some of the most sympathetic council members are. They will be able to help you navigate the process, and make sure there will at least be a public hearing on your proposal before it is voted on.

In any case, be sure to give yourself enough time to see the whole process through, and to maximize the educational and media opportunities raised by bringing an issue before the town. Seek creative, colorful ways to make the issue visible in your community, and get people talking about it. Several organizations around the country, including GEAN and the ISE, are able to offer helpful hints and ideas. Let us know how it's going, and how we can help!



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Campaign Steps

Organizing to pass a resolution in your local jurisdiction can be as engaging or as simple as time and energy allows. Please adapt these steps to your own particular situation:

- **Contact the Genetic Engineering Action Network** (563-432-6735, info@geaction.org) to see who else in your area has been active on GE issues. Start building a network of people to work with you. You may want to consult with people who have organized around other issues in your community and get advice from them.
- **Consult your Town or City Clerk** to find out what your local rules are on bringing an issue to the town/city government or to a town meeting. If you have town meetings, find out how many signatures you need to get an issue onto your town warning (agenda). Also confirm the deadline by which signatures need to be submitted. If you don't have town meetings, find out what the necessary steps are to get the town/city council or board of supervisors to consider a resolution. You may be able to find a sponsor on the council to bring your resolution forward, or you may be able to put something on the agenda by collecting a certain number of signatures of people in the community. Some cities and towns have a more complex process, whereby the wording of citizen petitions needs to be pre-approved or discussed in a public hearing in order for the petitions to be valid. Make sure you know all the rules that apply in your town.

Included in this section is a sample petition form you could use to gather signatures, with places for printed name, street address, signature, and optional information from those who want to help out.

- **Choose your resolution wording.** This toolkit offers a variety of examples and more are available from GEAN or from the Institute for Social Ecology office (802-454-7138, biotech@social-ecology.org) [without the “-” they’ll land at the site of an obscure software company!]. Most of these are examples of non-binding city or town resolutions that advocate for restrictions on the growing and/or selling of genetically engineered organisms, which is the campaign we outline in this section. If you are interested in pursuing a binding town/city ordinance on GMOs, please contact GEAN. There is a different set of strategy considerations to take into account when advocating for an ordinance, including how your city could deal with enforcement issues and possible state laws that prevent towns from taking binding action on this issue. Resolutions are likely much easier to pass through your town/city government than a binding ordinance.

- **Hold a community meeting** to plan your effort. Try to attract a diversity of participants, including local farmers, perhaps by holding a potluck dinner. It may be appropriate to arrange visits to local farms to discuss the issues. Please see “How to Develop a Local Group” for more ideas about organizing an initial campaign meeting.

- **Educate yourself and others** about genetic engineering. Assemble a packet of information that you can hand out to people when you're gathering signatures. Feel free to draw from the materials in this toolkit (please see the “Resources” section for ideas of outreach materials to use), and contact GEAN or the ISE for more.

- **Get advice from trusted sources.** It may be a good idea to talk with supportive members of your city/town/county council or select board before collecting signatures to be sure you understand the process you need to follow to get your resolution considered, and to ensure that the petitions you're using have all the information they need on them. Schedule a meeting with

someone on the council/board who you think will be friendly to your cause, and talk about your plan with them.

Also, think of which other groups in your community have presented resolutions to the town. Schedule meetings with them to find out about their experience, and to hear their advice about running successful campaigns to pass resolutions in your community.

- **Start gathering signatures.** You may need to collect a certain number of signatures to get your resolution on the town meeting agenda or to have the resolution considered by the council/supervisors/selectboard. Even if you don't need a set number of signatures for your resolution to be considered, it is a good idea to collect petition signatures to show the degree of support for your resolution in the community. This will also maximize the number of people you will educate about the hazards of genetic engineering in the course of your town resolution campaign.

It is important to get help with signature collection. Seek out supporters of your effort to help with signature gathering; consider approaching existing farmer or environmental groups for help, or talking with friendly local businesses or natural food stores to help secure support for your signature collecting efforts.

- **Map out the best locations for petitioning** in your town, such as local co-ops and other food stores, the Post Office (where feasible), coffee shops, and other well-traveled public places. Petitions posted on bulletin boards are helpful to start, but it usually requires a more person-to-person approach to obtain a strong number of signatures. Get as much help as you can.

- **Make sure you and people you know are registered to vote** in your city or town. Have voter registration materials readily available.

- **Practice speaking** about GMO issues. You will likely have an opportunity to testify before the council/board or to speak at the town meeting on this issue. Get a group of friends together and practice what you want to say. Also, find out if there is a time limit for how long you can speak during the meeting, and practice getting your comments to fit in that timeframe.

Prepare for the meeting

After you have received confirmation that your resolution will be discussed by your town, city, or placed on the ballot, the excitement has only just begun!

The weeks leading up to a vote or Town Meeting Day present unparalleled opportunities for public outreach, education and discussion about genetic engineering and how it affects us and our communities. Please consider the following ideas for raising public awareness as you prepare to present your resolution in public.

- **Call your friends** or interested petition signers to remind them to attend any public meetings where your resolution will be discussed. Encourage the most talkative and articulate ones to help you present the resolution or testify at the meeting. When the time comes, it will be nice to know that there are other people on your side who are prepared to speak in favor of the resolution.

- **Communicate with farmers.** It is helpful to inform local farmers (organic and conventional) of the resolution before it is heard at the town meeting, whether or not you think they will support it. This way you are able to present the issues in your own words, and also give

farmers the opportunity to discuss their questions, concerns, or support. Depending on your comfort level, you can approach farmers in your community in a number of ways:

- call them to talk about the resolution;
- arrange an in-person visit;
- write them a letter describing the resolution, and soliciting their suggestions;
- organize a meeting for farmers in your town to discuss the resolution and its implications with your organizing group and with each other.

You can also develop a special list of farmers who sign on to support the resolution, and present that at the meeting. Because farmers are so directly impacted by genetic engineering, it is important to solicit their support and to help their voices be heard by elected officials and your community members.

• **Collect letters of support** from sympathetic farmers and other influential people. Consider who in your town influences other community members and the people on your town council/selectboard. Ask these people to write or sign letters of support that you can bring to public meetings. If they are outspoken about their views, ask them to testify or help present the resolution at the meeting.

• **Write letters to the editor.** Local newspapers provide a great forum for introducing your resolution and the issues around genetic engineering to a wider public. Encourage supporters to submit letters to all of the daily and weekly papers in your area. Send copies of letters and articles to GEAN.

• **Hold a public forum.** One of the best ways to educate people and alert them to your resolution is to organize a public event. Many towns across the US have held panel discussions and film showings; both are good vehicles for organizing and for presenting the many ways that GE impacts our lives. Present your opinions openly and comfortably and invite discussion on the issue. Make sure that people know about the resolution or article that is coming up for a vote, and how they can get involved with the organizing process. In the “Resources” section of this toolkit is a list of films you could show at a forum, and speakers you could invite to give a public talk. Also, look over the “House Party” section in the fundraising piece of the toolkit for suggestions on holding a smaller gathering at your home. If you’d rather not organize an event, post information on genetic engineering in central public places (general stores, post offices, natural food stores, health clinics and food co-ops).

• **Notify local media.** Seek out potentially sympathetic reporters and pitch them the story. Or send press releases to your local newspapers, radio stations, and other local media. A press release can include a brief description of the resolution, a sentence about your connection to regional and national efforts, and some concise statements about the problems with genetic engineering (a sample press release is included in this section). If you write your press release in the form of a news story, some of the smaller local papers may choose to print it as submitted. Local talk shows and radio news programs often have large and active listenerships. Be careful about planning your media strategy so as not to prematurely tip off potential opponents who could invest large sums of money to defeat your resolution.

• **Develop a strategy** to deal with potential opposition. Be prepared for people opposing your article or resolution at your Town Meeting or public forum. Before any decision-making meeting, in addition to familiarizing yourself with information to counter popular arguments, you may want to consider compromise positions and alternative wordings (to make the resolution shorter, change potentially contentious wording, etc.) Have this language ready before town

meeting so that you can quickly add it to the debate on the floor in the interest of passing something, rather than nothing at all, while remaining confident that 90 percent of GE resolutions in Vermont to date have passed.

More campaign steps

After your town's vote . . .

- **Call GEAN** at 563-432-6735 or email info@geaction.org. Please let us know what happened in your town. Did your resolution pass? Exactly what wording passed? Did your town seem generally supportive of the resolution? If it was voted down, do you understand why? Do you have thoughts on changing the wording, or the process for next year? What would have helped you in your efforts? What advice would you give others working in your region? Which groups helped you to bring the resolution to vote?

- **Media!** You will greatly increase the impact your town resolution has on the future of genetic engineering by sharing your story with others through the media. Contact your local reporters, newspapers, and radio stations and let them know what happened in your town. Ask them to write an article, or offer to write one yourself. Send a letter to the editor and encourage other people to do the same. Send your press release to GEAN and ask us to use the Green Media Toolshed media service to help you get media coverage. Your success will help activists in other cities and towns pass their own local resolutions, and the media coverage of your victory will help increase the pressure on local, state, and federal elected officials to pay attention to citizens' concerns about genetic engineering and to pass progressive legislation on GMOs.

- **Write to your legislators**, state and federal. Tell them about the resolution that your town passed and urge them to take action. Although the federal and state governments have largely ignored the issue of biotechnology, municipalities passing resolutions are helping to wake them up!

- **Help develop structures for ongoing organizing.** Passing a town resolution can be a powerful first step in developing a local group to resist genetic engineering over the long-run. Once you have this victory under your belt, you can move on to work on other strategies in this toolkit or on another campaign. Your resolution may also inspire you to connect with organizers in other communities in your state, to share your experience and offer to provide organizing advice and support for their local efforts.

- **Monitor follow-up and implementation** of your resolution or ordinance. Keep a close watch on any actions taken by city or town officials following your vote. Make sure all steps that were agreed to by voters are actually carried out. If your resolution mandated notifying elected representatives of your town's position, offer to help town officials draft this letter and assemble helpful supporting materials. If there was opposition in your community to the resolution, find out more about it. Continuing to talk with farmers is an important part of on-going work.

Sample Resolutions

Here are nine sample resolutions that have passed in cities and towns. Currently, over 100 similar resolutions have passed in towns and cities in the US. As shown below, resolutions can be very short and sweet or long and substantial.

Boston, Massachusetts, March, 2000

RESOLUTION OF COUNCILOR MAURA HENNIGAN

WHEREAS: Genetically engineered foods have never been proven safe, nor are genetically engineered foods tested by any federal agency as the Food and Drug Administration requires only that the companies engineering these foods state, on the "honor system" that the foods are safe with no further testing required; and

WHEREAS: Cornell University researcher, John Losey, and other researches indicated in repeated tests that the larvae from Monarch Butterflies were dying at an alarming rate from toxic pollen generated from the genetically engineered corn near their feeding sites; and

WHEREAS: A class action lawsuit has been brought against the Food and Drug Administration by some of the nation's most prominent anti-trust lawyers for rushing these novel, unpredictable and untested food technology products to the market; and

WHEREAS: Numerous bioengineers and related distinguished scientists have gone on record stating this technology clearly is different from traditional breeding methods and is highly probable to exhibit a host of undesirable health and environmental risk factors as well as great potential for negative cascade effects in the genetic cross-pollination of beneficial plants, insects and other fragile ecosystems directly linked to the breeding of this novel experimental food production technology; Now, Therefore Be It

RESOLVED: That the Boston City Council, in meeting assembled, urges the Federal Government to require labeling of genetically manipulated foods and further urges a moratorium on the production of any more of these foods until acceptable testing systems are in place; and Be It Further

RESOLVED: That March 26, 2000 be declared YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT DAY in the City of Boston.

Austin, Texas, May, 2000

WHEREAS: Genetically engineered foods have never been proven safe, nor are genetically engineered foods tested by any federal agency as the Food and Drug Administration requires only that the companies engineering these foods state, on the "honor system" that the foods are safe with no further testing required; and

WHEREAS: Cornell University researcher, John Losey, and other researchers indicated in repeated tests that the larvae from Monarch Butterflies were dying at an alarming rate from toxic pollen generated from the genetically engineered corn near their feeding sites; and

WHEREAS: A class action lawsuit has been brought against the Food and

Drug Administration by some of the nation's most prominent anti-trust lawyers for rushing these novel, unpredictable and untested food technology products to the market; and

WHEREAS: Numerous bioengineers and related distinguished scientists have gone on record stating this technology clearly is different from traditional breeding methods and is highly probable to exhibit a host of undesirable health and environmental risk factors as well as great potential for negative cascade effects in the genetic cross-pollination of beneficial plants, insects and other fragile ecosystems directly linked to the breeding of this novel experimental food production technology;

Now, Therefore Be It RESOLVED:

That the Austin City Council, in meeting assembled, urges the Federal Government to require labeling of genetically manipulated foods and further urges a moratorium on the production of any more of these foods until acceptable testing systems are in place;

Be It Further RESOLVED:

That the Austin City Council endorses House Bills 3883 named the "Genetically Engineered Food Safety Act," and 3377 and its companion Senate Bill 2080 named the "Genetically Engineered Food Right-to-Know Act."

San Francisco, California, July, 2000

WHEREAS, consumers of any food product have the right to complete confidence and thorough knowledge of any ingredient in their food or other products; and

WHEREAS, genetically engineered (g.e.) foods have not been adequately tested by any federal agency for long-term impacts on human health or the environment; and

WHEREAS, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) suggests only that companies engineering foods state that g.e. foods are safe, but requires no further testing; and

WHEREAS, competent scientific researchers have suggested that g.e. foods, seed, and other products could pose risks to the environment, including damaged soil ecology, harmful effects to wildlife, increased use of farm chemicals, and other potential effects; and

WHEREAS, scientists and other researchers have indicated that g.e. crops may harm beneficial insect species, such as Monarch butterflies, as well as threatened and endangered insect species; and

WHEREAS, g.e. materials could have serious impacts on levels of toxins in food, antibiotic resistance, cancer, immuno-suppression, and allergic reactions, and may be particularly threatening to children and the elderly; and

WHEREAS, in the event of a serious health impact and an ensuing lawsuit, the federal government has not yet assigned liability to the commercial developers of G.E. foods; and

WHEREAS, G.E. foods are growing in prevalence in the United States and around the world, without sufficient regulation or research; and

WHEREAS, many community organizations, representing farmers and sustainable agriculture interests, as well as consumers, environmentalists and others, have argued for a moratorium on G.E. foods, and some countries have effectively—if not officially—instituted a moratorium, including France, Italy, Denmark, Greece, and Luxembourg; and

WHEREAS, the European Commission has agreed on terms to guarantee the labeling of G.E. foods; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley's Unified School District's Food Policy, adopted in August of 1999, establishes a goal of serving organic foods to the maximum extent possible in Berkeley's schools; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley's Board of Education and the Berkeley City Council have approved resolutions to urge the federal government to ban the growing, disseminating, and marketing of products that contain G.E. organisms until they have been proven safe for human consumption and for the environment; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Commission on the Environment hereby requests the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to write a letter to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) stating that all G.E. foods should be labeled clearly, that all G.E. material should be thoroughly researched and regulated, that liability should be assigned to the commercial developers of G.E. foods, and that, until there has been a violation of this Ordinance, in addition to confiscation and destruction of any organisms that are found to be in violation, the Agricultural Commissioner shall impose a monetary penalty on the person, firm, or corporation responsible for the violation, taking into account the amount of damage, any potential damage, and the willfulness of the person, firm, or corporation. these materials are proven safe, that the FDA, the EPA, and the USDA should establish a moratorium on these products; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission on the Environment urges the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to request that all City departments and agencies, including those in City Hall, give preference to certified organic food vendors during any and all contract negotiations; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission on the Environment urges the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to require that, by January of 2001, special events held by City departments and City agencies, including those in City Hall, give preference to caterers that avoid G.E. ingredients and use certified organic foods; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission on the Environment urges the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to urge the San Francisco Unified School District to serve certified organic lunches; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission on the Environment urges the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to request that the Department of Consumer Assurance provide educational materials about G.E. foods to grocers and where possible to the general public in San Francisco.

Hartford, Hartland, Royalton, West Windsor, and Sharon, Vermont, March 2003

Whereas many foods that we eat have been genetically engineered or contain genetically engineered ingredients, and

Whereas genetically engineered foods are fundamentally different from conventional foods in that they have foreign DNA from bacteria, viruses, animals or plants spliced into their genetic codes, and

Whereas such foods can have unpredictable effects on human health, and

Whereas consumers cannot avoid buying such foods since no foods in this country are labeled for genetically engineered content, and

Whereas the principles of democratic society require being able to make informed choices,

Therefore the residents of the town of Hartford vote to call upon our legislative and congressional representatives to work toward the mandatory labeling of all genetically engineered food products.

Middlesex and Hyde Park, Vermont, March 2004

Whereas genetically engineered (GE) foods and crops are likely to cause long-term damage to the environment, threaten the integrity of rural, family farm economies, and can have serious impacts on human health;

Whereas GE crops have been found to contaminate other crops through cross-pollination, and are stringently regulated in more than 30 countries; and

Whereas citizens throughout Vermont and the United States are taking steps to address concerns about GE foods at the state and local levels because Congress and federal regulatory agencies have failed to adequately address this issue, shall the residents of Middlesex:

1. Call upon our elected officials, including Vermont legislators, Congressional representatives and U.S. senators, to support the mandatory labeling by manufacturers and processors of all genetically engineered food and seeds, as well as a moratorium on the further growing of GE crops until there is credible and independent scientific evidence that these products are not harmful to our health, the environment, and the survival of family farms, and
2. Declare our support for legislation at the state and federal levels that will shift all liability from farmers to the commercial developers of GE technology [*Alternate language: "that will make the commercial developers of GE technology liable..."*] for any damages resulting from the growing of GE crops, and
3. Declare our opposition to the planting of genetically engineered seeds in the Town, and resolve to actively discourage the planting of GE seeds, as a step toward making Vermont a GE-free planting zone by the 2005 growing season. [*Note: in prior years, several towns used the language, "and declare a moratorium on the planting..."*]

Thetford, Vermont, March 2004

The Town of Thetford is concerned that unlabeled and unregistered genetically engineered seeds are being sold for use by Vermont farmers. We urge the state regulatory agencies to study the long-range consequences of this to Vermont agriculture, particularly as it affects organic farmers. Cross-pollination of crops has not been sufficiently tested. We support a two year moratorium on the use of genetically engineered crops in Vermont until this is done.

Rutland, Vermont, March 2004

The voters of the City of Rutland call upon the Governor, our State Legislators, and the Regulatory Agencies to require all Genetically Engineered (GE) food and seed be labeled as such. (Passed by a vote of 2140 to 601).

Cummington, Massachusetts, May 2004

Whereas the people of Cummington are concerned about the long-term health of our environment and of our local farms and farmers;

Whereas genetically engineered (GE) crops have not been proven safe for the humans or for the ecosystems with which they interact;

Whereas GE crops have been found to contaminate other crops and local flora through cross-pollination, causing unintended and unknown changes to their biology;

Whereas GE crops and products containing them are strictly regulated in more than 30 other countries; and

Whereas citizens throughout the United States are taking steps to address their concerns about GE crops in response to the failure of Congress and federal regulatory agencies to adequately address the issue;

The residents of Cummington hereby resolve:

1. To encourage a local moratorium on further growing of genetically engineered crops until there is credible and scientific evidence that these products are not harmful to our health or our environment.
2. Call upon our state and federal governments, including the Massachusetts Legislature, the U.S. Congress, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Food and Drug Administration, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to support the mandatory labeling of all genetically engineered foods and seeds and the full assignment of liability to the commercial developers of genetically engineered foods.
3. Agree that the Clerk shall send copies of this article to the elected representatives for this town, including the Massachusetts State Legislators, the Governor, the Commissioner of the Department of Food and Agriculture, and our Congressional Representative John Olver and Senators John Kerry and Edward Kennedy.

Brooklin, Maine, April 2005

Shall the town vote to voluntarily protect its agriculture and marine economies, environment and private property from irreversible genetically modified organism (GMO) contamination by declaring Brooklin a GMO-free zone?

[Passed by voice vote.]

Charlemont, Massachusetts, May 2006

The citizens of Charlemont resolved to:

1. To encourage a local moratorium on the growing of Genetically Engineered crops until there is adequate scientific evidence that these products are not harmful to us or our environment.
2. To call upon our state and federal governments, including the Massachusetts Legislature, the U.S. Congress, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to support the mandatory labeling of all Genetically Engineered foods and seeds, and to support the assignment of liability to the corporate developers of Genetically Engineered crops (rather than to farmers.)

Farmer Pledge of Support

While organic farmers have been among the most vocal supporters for a moratorium on growing genetically engineered crops, the views of so-called “conventional” farmers vary widely. The generally pro-agribusiness Farm Bureau claims to speak for these farmers, and has in most places taken a firmly pro-GE position. But many disagree. For example, prior to the 2004 Vermont legislative session, activists with the ISE Biotechnology Project and Rural Vermont developed a petition geared towards conventional dairy farmers. Their outreach efforts led to 120 conventional dairy farmers in the state signing the petition (below).

It will greatly strengthen your campaign to pass a town resolution if you follow the lead of Vermont organizers and focus on making farmer outreach a backbone of your campaign. Gaining the support of all kinds of farmers in your community (not just organic, but conventional, too) will help demonstrate the importance of restricting GMOs for the future of local agriculture.

Feel free to adapt the petition below and use it while doing outreach to farmers in your community.

We the undersigned conventional dairy farmers of Vermont are committed to cultivating only non-GE (genetically engineered) crops for the following reasons:

1. We recognize that “coexistence” of genetically engineered crops and non-GE crops is not possible because of genetic drift.
2. We respect our neighbors’ right to plant crops without the threat of cross-pollination from GE crops.
3. We want to maintain the pure image that Vermont products have on the market.
4. We are concerned that the cultivation of GE crops will create insects and weeds that have a higher resistance to insecticides and herbicides, which will be more difficult to control in the long run.
5. We are concerned because GE foods have not been proven safe for human consumption.
6. We do not want to further the corporate consolidation of our family farms and food.

Until genetically engineered crops were introduced into Vermont, different types of farmers could farm side by side and not threaten each other’s livelihood. Now, these GE crops threaten our farms and our markets. We believe that taking a time out from GE crops in Vermont would allow time for our policy to catch up with the technology and would support Vermont’s standards for producing high quality, safe food and would ensure a strong, viable market for Vermont products.

We, the undersigned, ask that you protect our state from the contamination and other problems caused by genetically engineered crops. We will not plant these seeds until we are sure that they will not threaten our neighbors or our environment. We are calling on the state legislature and administration to protect our farms, our food, and our families by supporting legislation to mandate the labeling of GE seeds sold in Vermont, to place the burden of liability for GE crops on the corporations who sell the seeds, to protect non-GE farmers from patent infringement suits, and to place a moratorium on the planting of GE crops in Vermont.

GMO-Free Hawai'i
A Project of Hawai'i SEED
PO Box 4661 ~ Hilo, HI 96720 ~ (808) 331-1211

GMO-Free Hawai'i Sign-On Statement

A) We have serious concerns about the risks genetic engineering poses to the economic viability of agriculture in Hawai'i, to the integrity of native ecosystems, and

to our public health.

B) We support locally-based agricultural systems that create real food security for Hawai'i while protecting human health and the environment.

• Be it resolved that we also support the actions listed below:

___1. The establishment of a "public right to know" regarding the location and nature of all experimental and commercial GMO field sites in Hawai'i

___2. Labeling of all GMO foods and seeds grown in the state

___3. A moratorium on the patenting of indigenous Hawaiian flora and fauna, and on the patenting of human genes taken from native Hawaiian peoples

___4. The assignment of liability for any health, environmental or financial damages incurred from GMO crops to the corporations, institutions, and patent holders who developed the GMO crops, and never to local farmers and growers

___5. Independent testing for GMO contamination of conventional and organic crops, to be paid for by those institutions and corporations growing GMOs in Hawai'i

___6. Independent peer-reviewed studies to evaluate the short- and long-term economic, health and environmental implications of GMOs in Hawai'i; to be compared with alternative agricultural options including organic agriculture

___7. The right of growers' associations in Hawai'i to veto the field testing and/or commercial release of genetically engineered varieties of their commodity in order to protect their markets

___8. The establishment of this town/community/island/county as a GMO-Free Zone

___9. A minimum five-year moratorium on open-air growing and testing of genetically engineered plants and animals in the State of Hawai'i

___10. Preventing contamination of a farmer's pure non-GMO seed; and protecting a farmer's right to save seed

___11. Eliminate tax credits for Hawaii's highly controversial agricultural genetic engineering industry

GMO-Free Hawai'i respects you and your organization and will only associate your name or your organization's name with the positions in this sign-on statement. If you or your organization cannot support all of the points, please indicate which actions you can support by placing a check mark in front of each point you support.

_____/We agree with all of the points and actions outlined in the GMO-Free Hawai'i sign-on statement.

_____ I/We agree with the first two introductory points (A and B) as well as the numbered actions that are checked above.

Name: _____

Title/Occupation: _____

Group/Business: _____

Number of people represented: _____

Phone: _____ Email _____

Address: _____

City _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Signature _____

☀ Please return by mail to HAWAII SEED, PO Box 4661, Hilo, HI 96720. Please return by e-mail to gmofreehawaii@riseup.net. Questions, please call (808) 331-1211.

For Immediate Release:
802.279.0985

For more info: Doyle Canning (mobile)

2003 Town Meeting: 36 More Towns Vote Against Genetic Engineering

**Wednesday press conference at Gardener's Supply, Intervale Rd. in Burlington,
10:30 AM**

Nearly 40 Vermont towns, from Brattleboro north to Bakersfield, voted at Town Meeting this week for resolutions opposing the genetic engineering (GE) of food and crops. As of 10:30 PM Tuesday evening, 36 have supported their resolutions, 4 have tabled the issue and 3 voted against it. A total of 69 Vermont towns have now gone on record against GE foods, beginning in 2000.

The details of the resolutions vary considerably from town to town, but all the resolutions call upon legislators and congressional representatives to support the labeling of GE foods. Most also support legislation for a moratorium on the planting of GE crops. Many towns have also declared that companies developing GE crops should bear legal liability for all harm resulting from these crops, instead of individual farmers. At least nine towns passed language either calling for a moratorium on the planting of GE crops in the town, or actively discouraging the planting of GE crops.

"This is an important milestone toward making Vermont the first state to go GE-Free," said Jim Moulton of Jamaica, Vermont, a volunteer organizer with the Windham County Genetic Engineering Action Group. "This would be a tremendous boon to our state's farm economy and to the integrity of Vermont's environment." The groups that make up the Town-to-Town Campaign are supporting legislation that has been introduced in the Vermont House, as well as working closely with farmers and local communities across the state that are wanting to take local action.

The following towns have passed resolutions this year (final language will be available in a few days):

Andover, Bakersfield, Brattleboro, Brownsville, Cabot, Chester, East Montpelier, Eden, Fletcher, Glover, Goshen, Halifax, Hardwick, Hartford, Hartland, Johnson, Landgrove, Londonderry, Middlebury, Morristown, Newark, Plymouth, Peru, Rochester, Rockingham, Royalton, Salisbury, Shoreham, Sharon, Tunbridge, Underhill, Vershire, Westford, Weston, Weybridge, Windham.

Resolutions were tabled in Albany, Arlington, Peacham and Fairfield, and voted down in Cornwall, Barnet and Wilmington.

Representatives of the sponsoring organizations, and people from towns that passed resolutions, will be speaking to the press at the Gardener's Supply greenhouse on Intervale Road in Burlington at 10:30 AM on Wednesday. There will be a rally on the State House lawn at noon on Thursday, March 13th.

(See www.geaction.org to download pdf attachments to Chapter 5, GE-Free Zones Literature and Vermont Town Resolution Literature)