Livestock Committee

GMO Vaccines

Avoiding genetically modified organisms is one of the major reasons consumers look to organic food, and this motivation is driving more consumers to organic as the debate grows over new approvals of GM crops and the lack of GMO labeling.

Finding out that there is a loophole in the organic standards that would allow the use of GMO vaccines will be hard for organic consumers to accept, when many of them have been looking to organic as a way to avoid GMOs. In the final rule, GMO technology is explicitly identified as an excluded method - a position that we support, with no exceptions or possible loopholes. The committee recommendation to allow the use of GMO vaccines that do not appear on the National List in certain poorly defined circumstances could quickly become a loophole and cause enormous credibility problems for the entire organic label. Therefore, we oppose this recommendation.

GMO Ad-Hoc Committee

Letter to Secretary Vilsack

Food & Water Watch supports the letter drafted by the Ad Hoc GMO committee to Secretary Vilsack. It addresses the critical concern of the organic community on issues of GMO contamination, sets a course for the Board to deal with clarifying issues around excluded methods, and asks the Secretary to acknowledge that that the responsibility to prevent GMO contamination of organics should not be borne by organic, but by those who develop, use, and regulate this technology.

It is very clear that organic farmers bear the burden of trying to prevent contamination from GMOs, a technology that they are not permitted to use. It is long past time for the USDA to require that the patent holders and owners of the technology take responsibility for contamination. A letter from the Board to the Secretary of Agriculture expressing the critical nature of this issue for the organic community is absolutely appropriate and long overdue.

Policy Development Committee

Conflict of Interest

Food & Water Watch supports the Policy Development Committee's efforts to enhance the Board's existing conflict of Interest policy. Adding clarity to both the definitions and to the procedures for the Board not only guarantees consistency for this current Board, but adds guidance for all future Boards. We also support the recommendation of the Center for Food Safety in recommending conflict of interest statements from contractors or consultants who write Technical Reviews or perform other work for the Board.