

## **'Rush to exploit biotechnology' concerns Suzuki**

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REGINA -- High-profile scientist and broadcaster David Suzuki gave a boost Monday to Saskatchewan organic farmers taking two multinational companies to court over genetically modified organisms.

Suzuki, speaking before delivering a benefit lecture in Regina on Monday evening, also raised his concerns over what he called the "rush to exploit biotechnology" with no idea of the long-term consequences.

"I'm a geneticist so I'm very excited by what's going on in terms of genetic engineering. I think we're seeing abilities now that I never dreamed I would live to see in my lifetime," Suzuki told reporters at the Regina International Airport.

"What bothers me is we have governments that are supposed to be looking out for our health, for the safety of our environment, and they're acting like cheerleaders for this technology, which . . . is in its infancy and we have no idea what the technology is going to do."

Suzuki said he wanted to help raise money for the Saskatchewan farmers' bid to launch a class action lawsuit against Monsanto and Bayer Crop Science.

"What organic farmers have said is genetically engineered organisms (GMOs) represent a kind of technology we do not want to incorporate into our food growing and I support that," Suzuki said.

The farmers, who have formed the Organic Agriculture Protection Fund (OAPF), were in a Saskatoon courtroom last November to try and have their case certified as a class action. The judge has yet to release a decision.

They ultimately want the court to rule on whether the companies are liable for farmers' losses due to GMO contamination of certified organic canola crops and farms.

The OAPF says the case could set a precedent establishing the liability of companies for the spread of GMOs.

Suzuki said he thinks the technology is too young to tout "so-called benefits" for agriculture, and it is also an experiment in food safety.

"Anyone that says, 'Oh, we know that this is perfectly safe,' I say is either unbelievably stupid or deliberately lying. The reality is we don't know. The experiments simply haven't been done and we now have become the guinea pigs."

Suzuki said that what is being done is "not just a logical extension of classical breeding" and the kind of agriculture that's been practised for years.

"There may be benefits down the line, but this is a revolutionary technology," he said.

Monsanto has called the farmers' lawsuit a platform for advancing the anti-GMO position of various groups in a public arena.

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