

SOD PRESENTATION
To The
House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture
Tuesday February 19th 2002 at Davidson Saskatchewan

My name is Arnold Taylor. I am the President of the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate otherwise known as SOD. We are an umbrella group formed to unite organic producers, certifiers, processors, traders and consumers.

I'd like to make some comments on the Future Role of Government in Agriculture, especially as it pertains to Organic Agriculture and how government policies affect our industry.

As you may know, SOD through our Organic Agriculture Protection Fund has taken a very strong legal position regarding the release of GMO's into the environment.

On Jan. 10th 2002 we launched a Statement of Claim under the Saskatchewan Class Actions Act against Monsanto Canada Inc and Aventis Cropscience Canada Holding Inc seeking damages for the alleged loss of the ability to serve the certified organic canola market. We will also be seeking a permanent injunction to prevent the introduction of GM wheat, including any further testing.

Organic farmers use crop rotations to combat weeds and pests and to build fertility. Organic standards prohibit the use of GE material in our production and processes. IE: a zero tolerance is required. We have had to live with the loss of Canola from our rotations. We cannot and will not sustain the loss of wheat.

Because of a questionable variety registration process, these GE wheat test plots have put the whole western Canadian wheat industry, both conventional and Organic at risk. Let there be no illusion. GMO's cannot be controlled and they cannot be contained. If we put GM wheat out there we will have GM wheat in the whole system and the subsequent loss of markets will be devastating. Why would you grow something that your most lucrative customers have told you they will not buy. Quite frankly, this issue is not about feeding the world, it is all about selling chemicals and seed use agreements.

We have over a thousand Certified Organic farmers in Sask., farming over one million acres. We have built this industry with virtually no support from governments and research institutions. The organic industry is growing at a rate of 20% a year. The Organic farmers of Saskatchewan are not going to stand idly by and watch the organic industry sacrificed on the " altar " of biotechnology.

As to the future Role of Government in Agriculture we would request that you ensure that the present laws are properly enforced. I would specifically refer you to a letter

to The Honourable Lyle Vanclief from our lawyer and also the reply from the lawyer for A&AFC.

In this letter we point out that the CFIA regulates the release of “plants with novel traits” such as GM canola and GM wheat with no regard for socio-economic impact. We are requesting a “ full environmental impact assessment” under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act or under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act [1999] including a socio-economic impact study before any further release of GE material, including confined test plots.

As a background, it is my understanding that the CEPA [1988] act in effect exempted the Seeds Act from its jurisdiction. But the CEPA [1999] replacement act had no such exemptions, therefore any testing of GMO wheat in 1999,2000 and 2001 would be inconsistent with the CEPA [1999] and quite possibly illegal.

In their reply the lawyer for A&AFC Dale Kohlenberg points out and I quote “On August 7,2001, the Governor in Council issued SOR/2001-306, which adds the Seeds Act and Seeds Regulations to Schedule 4 of the CEPA [1999]. This in effect exempts the Seeds Act from any jurisdiction under the CEPA [1999]. It is interesting that this happened at a time when there was considerable lobbying pressure to prevent the introduction or testing of GM wheat. In fact there has been no response by the Prime Minister and others to the July 31,2001 letter sent by the “Canadian Coalition on GE Wheat “ of which SOD is an integral part.

We believe that it is the government’s responsibility to protect us and that we should not have to take this legal action. Why were there no environmental impact studies done before the release of GE canola and testing of GE wheat.

The Future Role of Government in Agriculture should be to create and enforce legislation that will ensure that our air, soil and water are as pure as possible. You cannot produce pure food in a contaminated environment. We believe that the federal and provincial government’s blind support of the so-called chemical and bio-tech approach to agriculture has been and will continue to be detrimental to our soils air and water with the resultant deterioration of our communities, our health and our way of life.

We believe that the real opportunity in Agriculture is in producing food for the non-GMO market. We believe strong consideration should be given to enacting an immediate moratorium , better yet an outright ban on all new GMO material and commencing a cleanup of the few GM crops we have and declare Canada to be GMO free for all it’s agricultural production.

IT’S NOT TOO LATE, LET’S DO IT NOW