



Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, January 10, 2002

**News Release: Organic Farmers Sue Monsanto and Aventis**

Today in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, two certified organic farmers have sought a class action suit on behalf of all certified organic grain farmers in Saskatchewan against Monsanto and Aventis, seeking compensation for damages caused by their genetically engineered (GE) canola and to get an injunction to prevent Monsanto from introducing GE wheat in Saskatchewan.

The claim alleges that GE canola has spread across the prairies and contaminated conventional crops so extensively that most certified organic grain farmers no longer attempt to grow canola. Organic customers have a zero tolerance for genetically engineered crops.

The claim states that when Monsanto and Aventis introduced their GE canolas they knew, or ought to have known, that the genetically engineered canola would spread and contaminate the environment. The companies had no regard for the damage these crops would cause to organic agriculture. The claim alleges that loss of canola as an organic crop has robbed organic farmers of a high-paying and growing market.

Organic farmers believe the same thing will happen to wheat if GE wheat is introduced. Since wheat is the cornerstone of prairie agriculture, and essential for organic crop rotations, losing wheat to genetic contamination would devastate organic farming in Saskatchewan.

Arnold Taylor, president of the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD) says "We've been forced to live with GE canola. We've asked for a moratorium on GE wheat, we've lobbied to change the variety registration process, and we've just hit a brick wall. We feel we have no choice left but to pursue legal action. This is a matter of survival for organic agriculture in Saskatchewan."

If the action is certified as a class action by the Court under Saskatchewan's recently enacted Class Actions Act, all certified organic farmers in Saskatchewan will be represented, with the possibility that other Canadian certified organic grain farmers residing outside Saskatchewan being given the option of participating at a later date.

The suit seeks to hold Monsanto and Aventis responsible for any GM contamination on multiple grounds including negligence, nuisance, trespass, pollution under the Saskatchewan Environmental Management and Protection Act and failure to conduct an environmental assessment and seek ministerial approval as required by the Environmental Assessment Act of Saskatchewan.

Terry Zakreski, legal counsel representing the Plaintiffs, states that the next significant step in the process is to request that the Court certify the action as a class action under the Act, which he anticipates will take place within a few months. Funds to support this class action suit are being raised through the SOD Organic Agriculture Protection Fund (see [www.saskorganic.com](http://www.saskorganic.com) for details).

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Or visit the website at [www.saskorganic.com](http://www.saskorganic.com) and click on Organic Agriculture Protection Fund