

January 10, 2002

Statement by Arnold Taylor, SOD President

Good Afternoon Thank you for coming.

I'm Arnold Taylor I'm president of the Sask. Organic Directorate and chairman of the SOD Organic Agriculture Protection Committee.

I'd like to introduce Joan Harrison, past president of the Steep Hill Coop and a long time organic consumer. I'd also like to introduce Marc Loiselle of Vonda, co-chair of our research committee who will be talking to you about organic standards and our lobbying efforts. Also our legal counsel Mr. Terry Zakreski who will answer any specific legal questions you may have.

I want to speak to you today, primarily as a certified organic grain farmer. Every organic farmer has a story of why they are farming organically. I farm in the Kenaston area with my wife Sharon my son Doug and his wife Tracy and their family.

We farm 3500 acres certified organic as well as a certified organic beef herd. I started farming in 1972 and after 20 years of that treadmill known as conventional agriculture, our operation was virtually bankrupt. In 1991 we gave our land back to the creditors and leased it back. That experience, to say the least, was a wake up call. Even prior to that we were looking at organic production as an alternative. We had our first fields certified in 1992 and started converting our whole farm. Since then we have been able to repurchase our land as well as acquire some additional land as well as renting land.

I can say that organic farming virtually put the "fun back into farming" The hardest part was in the transition. I have often used the analogy "chemicals are like booze, you need a support group to get off them". The best part was working within the organic community to improve our farming and marketing methods. We found that once we got our heads around sound organic management practices, we could grow crops as good as, or often better than our conventional neighbours. We also found that our quality and protein improved as well as our prices improved sometimes quite dramatically. We also found that we had a closer relationship with the consumer. Sustainability was also a factor. We found that with the use of green manure crops we virtually eliminated any erosion problems.

We often had canola in our rotations until 1995. After 1996 with the advent of GE canola we found that because of the risk of contamination we would eventually have to remove canola from our rotations. Actually canola, being in a large market, should be a very valuable crop in our rotations, but with the proliferation of GE canola it is almost impossible to buy uncontaminated seed, let alone contend with contamination from pollen drift.

Organic farmers use crop rotations to control weeds and pests and build fertility. We have lost canola as a crop in our rotations because of genetic contamination, but we obviously cannot afford to lose wheat, which is our largest crop and largest market. Our ability to farm organically is being threatened.

Therefore we have called this news conference to announce the steps we are taking to defend our "right to farm GMO free"

This morning, a statement of claim was issued in Court of Queens Bench between Dale Beaudoin of Maymont and Larry Hoffman of Spalding, and Monsanto and Aventis. The above mentioned farmers have graciously allowed their names to stand to represent all certified organic grain farmers in Sask. so that this action can be brought under the Class Actions Act.

We are seeking compensation for damages caused by their genetically engineered canola and to get an injunction to prevent Monsanto from introducing genetically engineered wheat.

The SOD Organic Agriculture Protection Fund committee supports this action on behalf of the certified organic grain farmers of Sask as a class. We have raised enough money to proceed with this action but of course we will need more in the ongoing weeks.

I'm asking the organic farmers, processors, traders, certifiers and consumers to support this action with all they've got.

OUR VERY FUTURE IS AT STAKE