



1/23/08

Dear friends of organic agriculture,

I am a firm believer in agricultural progress. The human mind will always be working hard to come up with new ways of doing things and of solving problems. This is a very good thing. But to count as "true progress" in my mind, a new solution has to lead toward greater health. In agriculture this means greater health for the soil, the farmers and the community. I believe that with these as our priorities we can come up with creative scientific, economic, and social solutions for many of the challenges that we face. Our food systems need healing and I am a strong believer in our collective ability to do it.

High Mowing Organic Seeds has fought against genetic engineering for 10 years for many reasons, including what I have described above. On Wednesday, January 23, 2008, our efforts have reached a new level. We have entered into a lawsuit against the USDA for what we believe to be the premature deregulation of genetically engineered sugar beets. I feel that it is a crucial issue to bring attention to. The spread of any GE crops creates many environmental and economic as well as cultural risks. And it does not bring us any closer to the kind of progress that we need to be making to ensure a sustainable and even regenerative food supply for us all. Organic and non-GE farmers have the right to farm the way that they want to without concern of getting polluted by pollen that would cause a loss of the integrity of their crop. Consumers deserve the right to eat what they choose to without the concern of putting something into their bodies that they don't want to consume. For me, it is as much a private property issue as it is an environmental, economic and health issue. When one person's activities take away options or free choice from others it is unfair and I would argue, unconstitutional. And it is certainly worth fighting for!

In 2000, I started the Safe Seed Pledge. With the support and a great deal of help from 6 other seed companies, we drafted up a statement about our stance on genetic engineering. It is worth repeating here.

"Agriculture and seeds provide the basis upon which our lives depend. We must protect this foundation as a safe and genetically stable source for future generations. For the benefit of all farmers, gardeners and consumers who want an alternative, we pledge that we do not knowingly buy or sell genetically engineered seeds or plants. The mechanical transfer of genetic material outside of natural reproductive methods and between genera, families or kingdoms poses great biological risks, as well as economic, political and cultural threats. We feel that genetically engineered varieties have been insufficiently tested prior to public release. More research and testing is necessary to further assess the potential risks of genetically engineered seeds. Further, we wish to support agricultural progress that leads to healthier soils, genetically diverse agricultural ecosystems and ultimately healthy people and communities."

In support of farmers across our great country, we at High Mowing Organic Seeds, stand strong with millions of others who agree that this is not what we want to see in agriculture. I encourage all of you to join in our efforts and fight against what is happening in our food supply. But even

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more important than that, I encourage you to support the kind of agriculture that you want to see more of. Take this as an opportunity to join a Community Supported Agriculture Farm (CSA), join a food co-op, shop at a farmer's market, plant a garden, write a letter to the editor or run for office or become a farmer yourself! Just as the tide turns toward more and more GE crops, it is also turning toward more organic farms and more support for local agriculture. Become a part of the change you want to see in the world! Today!

With hope,

Tom Stearns, President
High Mowing Organic Seeds
Wolcott, Vermont