

My name is Jim Barngrover representing the Alternative Energy Resources Organization. AERO is a grassroots Montana based organization composed of over 500 rural and town folk. AERO's membership includes many conventional and organic Montana wheat producers. We strongly support SB 218 known as the "Farmer Protection Act".

Genetically Engineered organisms do not respect property borders and are causing harm through "transgenic" trespass. What we demand is that companies standing to profit from patenting genetically engineered seeds also accept responsibility for any damages their product may cause.

Trespass, in legal parlance, means "an unlawful act that causes injury to person or property." It connotes an act of intrusion, usually by means of stealth, force, or violence.

Genetic engineering technology is a trespass on the public commons. This is because of the way transgenics are designed and the way "the molecular vision" has been pursued. This vision required that science be compromised to the point where it would overlook the complex boundary conditions that form the very foundation of life. It had to have the hubris to break the species barriers and place itself directly in the path of evolution, severing organisms from their hereditary lineage. And it requires the use of stealth and violence to invade the cell wall, and the implanting of transgenic life forms into an involuntary participant.

This trespass continues when ownership is forced on the newly created organisms in the form of a patent. The patenting of a life form was widely considered immoral, and until the U.S. Supreme Court approved the patenting of life in 1980, it was illegal. With that one decision, private interests were given the right to own every non-human life form on earth. Now, when GMO's enter the borderless world of free trade and permeates every part of the web of life, they carry within them their owner's mark and effectively privatize every organism they infiltrate. This is made all the more unacceptable because this expensive technology is so unnecessary.

Most of what agricultural biotechnology sells, such as insect-resistant plants and weed-control strategies, is already available by other means. Traditional plant breeding can produce all these advances and more----including increased yield, drought, and even nutritional enhancements.

The whole point of the commercial use of the genetic engineering technology is the patents, and the social control they facilitate. The reason GMO's were inserted into crops is so that agbio-chemical companies could own the seed supply and control the means and methods of food production, and profit at each link in the food chain.

Genetic engineering is a manifestation of "full spectrum dominance." In this case, the dominance is achieved on multiple levels,

first by exerting biological control over the organism itself, then by achieving economic control over the marketplace and then through "perceptual" control over public opinion. GMOs are disguised to look just like their natural counterparts, and then are released into the environment and the human food chain through a matrix of control that identifies and disables every political, legal, educational, and economic barrier that could thwart their owners' purpose. Therefore denial of choice has been accomplished and it is crucial to this strategy's success.

Genetic engineering, at least as it is being used in agriculture is, by design, inherently invasive and unstable. It has been imposed on the American public in a way that has left us with no choice and no way to opt out, biologically or socially. Thus, the reality is that the evolutionary legacy of our lives, whether as human being, bees, fish, or trees, has been disrupted. We are in danger of being severed from our own ancestral lines and diverted into another world altogether, the physical and social dimensions of which are still unknown and yet to be described.

How do the manufactures of GMO's benefit from gene pollution? The industry calls contamination an "adventitious presence," as if it were a benign but unavoidable consequence of modern life, like background radiation from nuclear testing.

When farms or factories are contaminated with GMOs, the industry is not held responsible for clean-up costs, as would be the case with chemical contamination. Instead, massive GMO food and crop recalls have been subsidized by taxpayers. Industry not only doesn't pay for a farmer's losses; it often sues the farmer for patent infringement and makes money on the deal. Monsanto, in particular, has profited richly by extorting patent infringement fines from farmers whose crops were inadvertently contaminated.

A biotech industry consultant with Promar International, Don Westfall, put it this way: "the hope of industry is that over time the market is so flooded that there's nothing you can do about it. You just sort of surrender."

Kentucky small farmer, writer, and essayist Wendell Berry has a different perspective, "... Food is a cultural, not a technological, product. A culture is not a collection of relics and ornaments, but a practical necessity, and its destruction invokes calamity."

Members of the committee I suggest to you we have reached the cross roads in Montana as it pertains to genetically engineered wheat. Will we surrender to corporate agriculture dominance-----or protect the culture of family farmers.

It is your call!!!