

CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY – FOOD AND WATER WATCH – SALMONAID  
NORTHWEST ATLANTIC MARINE ALLIANCE - ORGANIC CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION –  
FRIENDS OF THE EARTH – THE LIVING OCEANS SOCIETY – SMALL BOAT COMMERCIAL  
SALMON FISHERMEN’S ASSOCIATION – THE GEORGIA STRAIT ALLIANCE – CALIFORNIANS FOR  
GE-FREE AGRICULTURE – THE ORGANIC & NON-GMO REPORT – PLANETARY HEALTH, INC. – SIERRA  
CLUB – SAY NO TO GMOS! – CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – CANADIAN BIOTECHNOLOGY  
ACTION NETWORK – INSTITUTE FOR FISHERIES RESOURCES – AMERICAN ANTI-VIVISECTION  
SOCIETY – PACIFIC COAST FEDERATION OF FISHERMEN’S ASSOCIATION – MANGROVE ACTION  
PROJECT – FOOD FIRST / INSTITUTE FOR FOOD AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY – EDEN FOODS, INC. –  
THE NON-GMO PROJECT – NORTHWEST RESISTANCE AGAINST GENETIC ENGINEERING –  
PCC NATURAL MARKETS – AMBERWAVES – GLOUSTER FISHERMEN’S WIVES ASSOCIATION –  
FRESH THE MOVIE – WASHINGTON BIOTECHNOLOGY ACTION COUNCIL –  
OREGON PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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**COALITION DEMANDS FDA DENY APPROVAL OF  
CONTROVERSIAL GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FISH**

***FDA Considers Approval of GE Salmon--the First GE Food Animal--Yet Fails to  
Inform the Public of Environmental and Economic Risks***

**Washington, DC August 27, 2010** – A coalition of 31 consumer, animal welfare and environmental groups, along with commercial and recreational fisheries associations and food retailers submitted a joint statement criticizing an announcement this week by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that it will potentially approve the long-shelved AquaAdvantage transgenic salmon as the first genetically engineered (GE) animal intended for human consumption.

The engineered Atlantic salmon being considered was developed by AquaBounty Technologies, which artificially combined growth hormone genes from an unrelated Pacific salmon, (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) with DNA from the anti-freeze genes of an eelpout (*Zoarces americanus*). This modification causes production of growth-hormone year-round, creating a fish the company claims grows at twice the normal rate. This could allow factory fish farms to crowd fish into pens and still get high production rates.

Each year millions of farmed salmon escape from open-water net pens, outcompeting wild populations for resources and straining ecosystems. “We believe any approval of GE salmon would represent a serious threat to the survival of native salmon populations, many of which have already suffered severe declines related to salmon farms and other man-made impacts,” Marianne Cufone, director of Food and Water Watch’s fish program said.

If the FDA opens this door, GE fish will likely be among the millions of salmon that currently escape from open ocean pens every year. This could be the last blow to wild salmon stocks and in turn the thousands of men and women who depend on fishing for their livelihoods. “Approving genetically engineered salmon is a sharp contradiction to the agreements the United States has signed at NASCO, where transgenic salmonids are considered a serious threat to wild salmon” said Boyce Thorne Miller, Science and Policy Coordinator for the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance and accredited observer at the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization.

Escaped GE salmon can pose an additional threat – genetic pollution resulting from what scientists call the “Trojan gene” effect.” Research published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* notes that a release of just sixty GE salmon into a wild population of 60,000 would lead to the extinction of the wild population in less than 40 generations.

Anticipating the stark danger to our fisheries and ocean environments - and trying to circumvent analyses of those dangers - AquaBounty has claimed that they will only raise their fish in land-based facilities. However most salmon farmers in the real world ply their trade in low-lying coastal areas and competing corporations will no doubt race to produce GE fish in crowded open ocean facilities already in use for fish production. Backsliding on its original claims, reports have circulated that AquaBounty may only suggest producers raise GE fish in “inland waters” – presenting novel threats to our nation’s lakes, rivers, and estuaries – many of which are already under attack by invasive fish species like the Asian carp and Northern snakehead.

“FDA’s decision to go ahead with this approval process is misguided and dangerous, and is made worse by its complete lack of data to review” said Andrew Kimbrell, Executive Director for the Center for Food Safety. “FDA has been sitting on this application for 10 years and yet it has chosen not to disclose any data about its decision until just a few days before the public meeting.”

On Wednesday, FDA officials announced that they had begun the approval process for the engineered salmon and have scheduled public meetings beginning Sunday, September 19. Speakers wishing to present oral comments are expected to submit their requests in writing by September 7<sup>th</sup>; one day after the FDA has said it may post “some” of the data to its website. “This is not a process that leads to full and informed public participation,” said Charles Margulis, Sustainable Food Program Coordinator for the Center for Environmental Health.

FDA announced the same day that it will hold a public comment period and a hearing on labeling for the transgenic salmon, which seems to presuppose that the controversial GE fish will be approved. If the GE fish is approved, Agency officials are undecided as to whether they will require any product labeling.

“We all know there is a great appetite for salmon, but the solution is not to ‘farm’ genetically engineered versions to put more on our dinner tables; the solution is to work to bring our wild salmon populations back” said Jonathan Rosenfield, PhD, a Conservation Biologist and President of the SalmonAID Foundation, a 28-member coalition of commercial, tribal, and sportfishing interests, conservation organizations and chefs. “The approval of these transgenic fish will only exacerbate the problems facing our wild fisheries.”

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