

Written evidence submitted by Tessa Burrington (COM0123)

I am writing as a concerned individual with an interest in corporate influence on science.

I wanted to write to the Committee to express my concern regarding some of the conclusions drawn by the GM foods and application of the precautionary principle in Europe inquiry in 2015, namely that the conclusions were written on the assumption that there is scientific consensus on GMO safety so to speak. In my opinion this assumption is misleading the public.

It is important in my opinion, for the public and non establishment scientists and academics to speak up, especially in light of the Brexit challenges which now face the country.

Thank you to the Committee for the opportunity to comment.

I wanted to draw to the attention of the Committee four important “projects”:

1. The Monsanto Tribunal

The Monsanto Tribunal is an international civil society initiative to hold Monsanto accountable for human rights violations, for crimes against humanity, and for ecocide. Eminent judges will hear testimonies from victims, and deliver an advisory opinion following procedures of the International Court of Justice. A parallel People's Assembly provides the opportunity for social movements to rally and plan for the future we want. The Tribunal and People's Assembly will take place between 14 and 16 October 2016 in The Hague, Netherlands.

The terms of reference of the Tribunal are set out in the footnote.¹

2. GMO Symposium 2016

Knowledge gaps in GMO-risk assessments and the missing research agenda in agroecology²

“The Swiss GMO-Free Alliance welcomes you to an exclusive scientific symposium on the 10th of November 2016 on the topic of genetic engineering and agriculture. Our goal is to initiate an in-depth discussion about the risks of genetic engineering and to disprove the notion that there is a scientific consensus on the harmlessness and usefulness of GMOs. The symposium is intended for policy makers, scientists, Swiss government representatives, decision-makers in NGOs in this field, interested students and the media.”

The Programme includes a session:

Introductory speech: WHY “BIOENGINEERING” IS REALLY BIOHACKING.

Examining How the Genetic Engineering of Our Food Is Unsound from the Perspectives of Both Biological Science and Computer Science.

Steven Druker

¹ <http://www.monsanto-tribunal.org/How>

² <http://symposium.gentechfrei.ch/>

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Steven Druker is a public interest attorney who is the executive director of the Alliance for Bio-Integrity (an American NGO). In 1998 he initiated a lawsuit that forced the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to divulge its files on genetically engineered foods, which revealed that politically influenced administrators had covered up the extensive warnings of their own scientists about the abnormal risks, misrepresented the facts, and then ushered these novel products onto the market in violation of explicit mandates of federal food safety law.

He has served on the food safety panels at conferences on GMOs conducted by the U.S. National Research Council and the FDA; has been invited to present lectures at numerous universities (including Harvard, Columbia, Cornell, and the University of Copenhagen), and has met with government officials throughout the world, including the UK's Environmental Minister and the heads of food safety for the UK, France, Ireland, and Australia. He also conferred at the White House Executive Offices with an interagency task force of President Clinton's Council on Environmental Quality. His articles on GE food have appeared in several respected publications, including *The Congressional Quarterly Researcher*, *The Parliament Magazine*, and *The Financial Times*. He earned both his B.A. (in philosophy) and his Juris Doctor from the University of California, Berkeley and received significant honors at both levels. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year, graduated with "Great Distinction in General Scholarship," and received a special award from the philosophy department for "Outstanding Accomplishment." He subsequently was elected to both the *California Law Review* and the Order of the Coif (the legal honor society).

His new book, *ALTERED GENES, TWISTED TRUTH: How the Venture to Genetically Engineer Our Food Has Subverted Science, Corrupted Government, and Systematically Deceived the Public*³, was released in March 2015 with a foreword by Jane Goodall hailing it as "without doubt one of the most important books of the last 50 years." Among the other scientists who have also praised it highly are David Schubert, a professor and laboratory director at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, who has called it "incisive, insightful, and truly outstanding"; and Joseph Cummins, a Professor Emeritus of Genetics at Western University, London, Ontario, who called it "a landmark" that should be "required reading" in every university biology course.

The session by Dr. Les Levidow may also be of interest to the Committee.

Les Levidow is a Senior Research Fellow at the Open University, UK, where he has been studying agri-environmental issues of technoscientific innovation since the late 1980s. Case studies have included: agbiotech, the bioeconomy, bioenergy, alternative food networks, agroecology and green economy. He participates in the core expert group of Technology Platform Organics. As well as numerous articles, he is co-author of two books: *Governing the Transatlantic Conflict over Agricultural Biotechnology: Contending Coalitions, Trade Liberalisation and Standard Setting* (Routledge, 2006); and *GM Food on Trial: Testing European Democracy* (Routledge, 2010). He is editor of the journal *Science as Culture*.

3. Universities for sale?

³ <http://alteredgenestwistedtruth.com/>

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The influence of the arms, fossil fuels and other industries. **SGR conference and AGM.**

This conference will discuss the ways in which controversial industries are involved at UK universities, how government policies which encourage this, and the range of detrimental effects - and then discuss proposals for change.⁴

4. Uncontrolled spread of genetically engineered organisms

Testbiotech are running a documentation of uncontrolled spread of genetically engineered organisms and are demanding effective measures for prevention.⁵

Today, 30 September 2016 The Nuffield Council on Bioethics issued a Report on Gene Editing. I do not agree with the Nuffield regarding some of the content of their Report i.e. Food. There does appear to be some bias in the Nuffield Report and alternative viewpoints do exist to those expressed by the Nuffield. I believe it is in the public interest that those alternative view points are discussed^{6 7}. The Nuffield Report sets out only one view point but there are others. I would strongly urge the Committee to take its time when deciding how science should be funded which will ultimately influence the direction of science^{8 9 10}. There is too much at stake for rushed decision making and I would recommend that the Committee does not cave into pressure from the United States.^{11 12}

September 2016

⁴ <http://www.sgr.org.uk/events/universities-sale>

⁵ https://www.testbiotech.org/en/project_spread_transgenes

⁶ <http://www.iatp.org/blog/201606/secret-science-would-help-streamline-biotech-and-other-food-product-approvals>

⁷ <https://corporateeurope.org/food-and-agriculture/2016/02/biotech-lobby-push-new-gmos-escape-regulation>

⁸ Written in 1998? Uninventing Technology? <http://www.luddites200.org.uk/returnofGeneralNedLudd.html>

⁹ <http://www.foodsovereignty.org.uk/2015/11/agroecology-now-the-fight-for-agroecology-in-the-united-kingdom/>

¹⁰ <http://www.iatp.org/documents/from-gmo-to-smo-how-synthetic-biology-evades-regulation>

¹¹ <https://corporateeurope.org/pressreleases/2016/04/commission-fails-regulate-new-gmos-after-intense-us-lobbying>

¹² <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/news/biotech-ambassadors-diplomacy-or-marketing>