



# ORGANIC WHEAT

*Organic farming is one of the fastest growing areas of agriculture. The introduction of genetically modified (GM) wheat threatens to contaminate organic crops. Farmers are growing increasingly concerned about the future of organic wheat production.*

## Organic Farming and GM Crops

Organic farming is an \$10 billion a year business in the United States. Each year, more and more farmers, drawn by the potential to increase farm income with the premium prices brought by organic products, are implementing organic farming programs on their land. The amount of certified organic cropland has more than doubled in the last 10 years.

In order to advertise their crops as certified organic, farmers must show that their crops are free of chemicals and genetically modified material.

Complete segregation of GM crops from conventional and organic crops cannot be guaranteed, so the introduction of a new GM crop could contaminate the organic food supply.

Monsanto Co. and several other agriculture biotechnology companies are developing strains of genetically modified wheat. This wheat, if introduced into commercial markets and the environment, will devastate the U.S. organic wheat industry.

## Organic Food Standards

In 2002, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) implemented new guidelines to ensure organic food standards are consistent nationwide. Products that meet the new requirements receive a USDA Organic Seal letting consumers know that the food contains at least 95% organic products. To earn this seal, the food producer must follow regulations set by the USDA as well as allowing inspections and testing done on the crop at any time to ensure the crop is GM-free and was produced according to USDA standards.



## Organic Wheat Facts

- Organic wheat production has increased 55% in the last decade.
- Organic wheat is grown in 24 states.
- One-third of one percent of all wheat produced in the United States is organic.
- Each year more than 200,000 acres of organic wheat are grown in the United States.
- In 2003, organic wheat was worth between \$5.00-\$7.65 per bushel.
- Studies have shown that organic wheat often yields 20% more per acre than conventional wheat.
- Montana and North Dakota are the leading producers of organic wheat in the United States, producing nearly 40% of the total organic wheat crop each year.
- Foods made with organic wheat are healthier than foods made with conventional wheat, since no pesticides are used. For example, whole wheat bread, using the entire kernel, can contain more pesticides than even white bread, which is made using only the inside of the kernel.

## Canadian Organic Canola

In 2002, the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD) filed a class action lawsuit against the biotech companies Monsanto and Bayer (formerly Aventis). The claim seeks damages from the loss of markets due to the introduction of GM canola. SOD is also seeking an injunction against the commercial release of Roundup Ready wheat in Canada.

SOD argues that farmers were not informed about the potential impacts to neighboring crops that were caused by GM canola and that Monsanto and Bayer violated environmental laws by not conducting impact assessments before releasing the seeds into commercial markets.

Organic producers say that pollen from GM canola is blowing into their fields, contaminating their crops and their seed supply. 60% of the canola grown in Saskatchewan is now genetically modified. Before GM canola was introduced, there were more than 1,000 organic farmers in Saskatchewan with organic cropland totaling over one million acres. Today, organic canola farmers can no longer guarantee that their crops are 100% organic and have lost customers willing to pay premium prices for organic crops.

Organic wheat producers in the U.S. and Canada are concerned that this same thing could also happen with organic wheat industry.

*“Because of the extensive GM contamination of canola by genes introduced into the environment by the defendants, few, if any, certified organic grain growers in Saskatchewan will include canola in their crop rotations and risk contamination.”* —Claim filed in Saskatchewan court by the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate

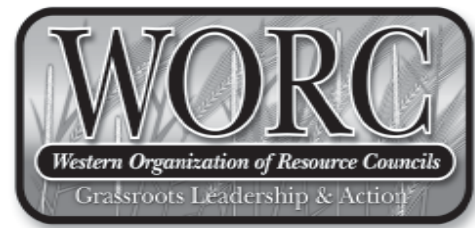
### What You Can Do

Support organic farming by buying organic foods

Ask your local bakeries and markets to buy only GM-free wheat

Ask your state and local representatives to support policies that protect organic growers from genetic contamination

Visit WORC's website, [www.worc.org](http://www.worc.org), to stay informed on food safety and GM issues



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