

Genetic Engineering Action Network

Local Organizing Toolkit

Introduction

Dozens of countries around the world have been concerned about genetic engineering in agriculture for many years now. Here in the United States, the movement to resist genetic engineering is relatively new. Awareness about the hazards that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) pose to public health, the environment, and the livelihood of American farmers is now beginning to grow. With this increased understanding and alarm come new opportunities for concerned citizens to take action, and lessons to be learned from community victories being won across the country to resist genetic engineering.

Community organizing around any issue is a powerful way to build connections with the people who live near you and to lay the foundation for collaborative action that can help people work together to increase local control of the food supply and the environment over the long term. Genetic engineering is an issue that has special power to bring diverse constituencies in a community together. Farmers, indigenous rights activists, native plant groups, wildlife and endangered species preservationists, food activists, parents, students, and consumer groups are only a few of the sectors of the population that have a stake in protecting themselves from the risks and consequences of genetic engineering in agriculture.

The Genetic Engineering Action Network (GEAN) seeks to support and further the work of those organizations and individuals working to address the risks to the environment, biodiversity and human health, as well as the socioeconomic and ethical consequences of genetic engineering. GEAN recognizes the importance of sharing the resources available in our network with emerging activists and grassroots groups that are now springing up across the country.

The GEAN Steering Committee and staff were asked by GEAN affiliates to provide a package of materials that can help individuals develop local groups; help established grassroots groups take on winnable, strategic campaigns; and bring together materials that will assist the success of local efforts in communities across the country. The materials included in the Local Organizing Toolkit will inevitably expand over time as the movement grows.

This toolkit is structured to provide resources around a few main themes, from general guidance on how to develop a local group to specific resources on four grassroots campaigns. Some of these resources are fully fleshed out (like the sample campaign target and tactics), and others point you to places on the internet where you can find some of the strongest information that has already been developed around these topics.

Please note that GEAN is a large and diverse collection of organizations, and the statements and materials presented in this toolkit do not necessarily reflect those of all of GEAN's affiliate organizations.

For more information please contact the Genetic Engineering Action Network at 563-432-7484 or info@geaction.org.

Acknowledgements

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The GEAN Steering Committee and National Coordinator guided and implemented this project with the help of volunteers and GEAN affiliates, while making the information in the toolkit available at key opportunities in campaigns.

In the duration of the Toolkit compilation, Steering Committee members and staff have changed yet all have supported this project. For a complete list of GEAN Steering Committee members, visit www.geaction.org.

Noli Hoye, GEAN National Coordinator February 2005-February 2006
Stephanie Weisenbach, GEAN National Coordinator March 2006-present

Organizations whose materials are referenced in the Local Organizing Toolkit:
(See more specific credits at the end of each section in the toolkit)

20/20 Vision www.2020vision.org

Benton Foundation www.benton.org

Californians for GE-Free Agriculture www.calgefrees.org

Consumer Policy Institute/Consumers Union www.consumersunion.org

Occidental Arts and Ecology Center www.oaec.org

Environmental Commons www.environmentalcommons.org

Evergreen www.evergreen.ca

Fenton Communications www.fenton.com

Foundation Center www.fdncenter.org

GMO-Free Hawaii, www.gmofreehawaii.org

Grassroots Fundraising Journal www.grassrootsfundraising.org

Green Media Toolshed www.greenmediatoolshed.org

Institute for Responsible Technology www.responsibletechnology.org

Institute for Social Ecology's Biotechnology Project www.social-ecology.org

Midwest Academy www.midwestacademy.com

Organic Consumers Association www.organicconsumers.org

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility www.oregonpsr.org

SmartMeme www.smartmeme.com

The Foundation Center www.fdncenter.org

Western Organization of Resource Councils www.worc.org

(See a full list of GEAN affiliates at www.geaction.org)