See Where Oregon Candidates Stand on GMO Issues

**Our Family Farms will be the first to tell you that your vote matters.** In 2014, Jackson County created a GE-free seed sanctuary because we had a record breaking voter turnout who supported family farmers. Proof that you can make the difference!

This year there are many races on all levels that will impact our economic and agricultural future. We encourage you to become familiar with the candidates in your district to understand their position on the issues that are important to you.

Our Family Farms sent a survey to all State Representative and State Senate candidates in Oregon, as well as all candidates for Jackson and Josephine County Commissioner positions to see where they stood on issues that we care about. Here’s what we asked them:

1. What are your thoughts regarding GE-free agricultural zones as part of the overall mix of agriculture in Oregon?
2. How would you support family farmers looking to meet the growing demand for GE-free crops and seeds?
3. What ideas do you have to help farmers protect their traditional crops and seeds from contamination by GE pollen?

All responses received are published [here](#) verbatim. This information should not be construed as an endorsement for any candidate.

If you don't see a response from your local candidate, contact them and find out where they stand. Check your ballot for a full list of candidates in your district.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Gaining Ground** in Ashland
Tuesday, October 25 at 7pm at Ashland's Varsity Theater

*Gaining Ground*, a new film about Growing Food, Empowering Communities, and Changing Lives, will energize and inspire you, and remind us all why we do what we do. The film interweaves the journeys of rural farmers and inner city food activists making extraordinary changes to feed their local communities healthy, sustainably grown food.

The screening will be followed by a Q and A with the filmmakers and some of the people featured in the film. We wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to the filmmakers Elaine Velazquez and Barbara Bernstein, who have been creating
award-winning film and radio documentaries for over thirty-five years, for donating a portion of the proceeds from the Ashland showing to Our Family Farms!

This event is co-sponsored by Our Family Farms, Thrive, Rogue Valley Food System Network, Rogue Valley Farm to School and Oregonians for Safe Farms and Families.

Advanced tickets are available here for $9 or $10 at the door

Rogue Valley Premiere of SEED: The Untold Story
In Grants Pass, Nov 4th at the Southgate Cinema and November 4th-10th at Ashland's Varsity Theater

Join the filmmaker for a Q&A after the screening on Nov 4th in Grants Pass and Nov 5th in Ashland.

From the creators of the award winning Queen of the Sun: What Are the Bees Telling Us? and The Real Dirt on Farmer John comes SEED: The Untold Story.

COMING SOON! Our Family Farm's Farm Box

We are excited to launch our new Farm Box program! Orders will be accepted starting the first week in November. Just in time for the holidays!

Boxes are filled with organically grown goods direct from Oregon farms and packed in eco friendly wood crates made from salvaged wood by an Oregon farmer. Two sizes will be available and can be shipped directly to your recipient.

Send a gift that you can feel good about! Sales support family farmers and the good work of Our Family Farms.

Sign up to be notified when orders are being accepted.

Welcome to Our Newest Business Members!
Thanks to Pacific Botanicals for becoming an Our Family Farms business supporter. Show your support and become a member today!

Pacific Botanicals

Pacific Botanicals is dedicated to empowering people everywhere to experience the miracle of good health. Founded in 1979, it is one of the most experienced and diversified medicinal herb suppliers in North America. In addition to their own 140 acre certified organic farm in Grants Pass, they have built partnerships with organic growers around the U.S. and the world to bring a full line of medicinals, including over 200 fresh and dried medicinal herbs and spices, as well as bulk seeds and sea vegetables.
They are members of the American Herbal Products Association, The Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, United Plant Savers, and the American Botanical Council and have been awarded the Salmon Safe Certification for their sustainable farming practices and conservation measures to protect Salmon in their watershed.

NEWS

2016 Food Sovereignty Prize Awarded

Last week, representatives of over 20 organizations gathered in Seattle and Bellingham for several days of dialogue, action, and celebration of the growing food sovereignty movement. The Encounter, co-hosted by Community Alliance for Global Justice and Community to Community Development, was a national gathering of the US Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA). Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa and Farmworkers Association of Florida were honored as recipients of the 8th Annual Food Sovereignty Prize.

Awarded by USFSA as an alternative to the World Food Prize awarded the same weekend in Iowa, the Food Sovereignty Prize recognizes that transformation of our food system comes from the grassroots, frontlines, and communities building power – not corporate, biotech, and Big Ag industries focused on profit over people and the planet. Coming together for the Prize and events was an opportunity to reflect on strengthening our organizing and advocacy for agroecology, food as a human right, dignity for workers across the food chain, and community-led solutions to hunger and climate change. Read More

What is Synthetic biology and why should we care about it?

By Dr. Ramon Seidler

I recently read that if you asked 5 experts, you would likely get 6 different answers to this question.

Here is one answer from a special United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity reviewing the issues associated with this technology over the last 8 years: “Synthetic biology is a further development and new dimension of modern biotechnology that combines science, technology and engineering to facilitate and accelerate the understanding, design, redesign, manufacture and/or modification of genetic materials, living organisms and biological systems.” Whew, not very clear is it?

How about this definition? It's all about using microbes to synthesize a product of value by genetically placing new biochemical capabilities into a microbe.

Synthetic Biology (syn-bio) is a “novel” approach to producing chemicals and food additives such as fragrances, vaccines, biofuels, and pharmaceuticals, using one or more modern biotechnology genetic engineering techniques. It involves genetic engineering in a different way from current GE crops, but most of us know little to nothing about the technique or the commercial syn-bio products that we may be consuming every day.

At this time in the U.S., it is an unregulated technology and of course there are no labels to know when such a product is being consumed. The European Health and Food Safety Committees have been struggling for a consensus regulatory ruling since at least 2008. Most governments are just sailing along under the good faith that corporations say it is safe. I have been told by a colleague in the United
Kingdom that syn-bio products are regulated there under one or more of the existing GE organism rules but such assurances are not yet confirmed nor findable on the internet.

Generically speaking here is how a syn-bio product might be made. First, science must define and understand the cellular pathway to make a given product—let’s say vanilla. Then, one goes to a computer and finds the DNA sequences and genes functioning in the pathway that makes vanilla. The scientist can print out the chemical composition (sequences within DNA) of these genes. Then, this sequence data is sent to a company to synthesize the actual DNA molecules that make up this pathway. The real DNA is then incorporated into an alga or yeast or bacterial cell using something like a biolistic or explosive gun or a genetic technique, then they select cells that make the new vanilla product and voila! Once the newly created organism is verified, the production is tooled up to make the product (vanilla) in huge fermentation tanks like in a brewery. The chemical (vanilla) is isolated, sold and distributed.

Please understand this process makes only “vanilla.” In actual practice, when extracted from tree pods, vanilla contains about 250 different chemicals, not just one.

No regulators to deal with, no oversight, just market it and make money. There are many products already on the market and numerous ones in the pipeline. Here is a partial list of the more common products that have been developed and may be in our lives now, or soon:

- Flavors/additives: vanilla, stevia, saffron, cocoa butter
- Personal care: rose aromas, patchouli incense fragrance and squalane skin moisturizer
- Animal replacement products (artificial milk!)
- Isoprene to make rubber for tires
- Surfactants from agricultural waste products
- Vaccines from artificially constructed gene products
- Cephalexin antibiotic from 2 enzymes, not 13 step chemical process
- Adipic acid precursor for nylon ($5 billion industry)
- Biofuels as petroleum alternatives
- Pharmaceutical to treat diabetes II called Januvia. Synthesis modification in progress now.

It’s easy to understand how this is an annual $40 billion business with some 200 companies involved in producing products.

High level conversations among scientists at a recent conference promoted by MIT listed the first two items as important and relevant concerns as syn-bio continues its paths of development:

1. The accidental release of a harmful organism or system that was designed to be benign and not be released into the environment. (italics mine)
2. The purposeful release of a harmful organism or system that was designed to be released (biological warfare agent).

Here are other issues discussed elsewhere:

1. Numerous social and religious debates and concerns over production and use of syn-bio human and animal products for correcting illnesses and diseases;

2. Destruction of natural planetary biodiversity by laboratory substitutes for each and every chemical deemed to be syn-bio profitable. For example, who would cultivate and tend natural vanilla trees or crocus plants if there is little to no market for the natural product?
3. Little to no knowledge of the genetic, ecological, or health consequences of escaped syn-bio organisms not completely sterilized as each batch is flushed out of the fermentation tanks; who monitors/specifies criteria to monitor for sterile effluents?

4. Other concerns with syn-bio products include the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs involving small farmers who currently cultivate crocus for saffron, vanilla tree plantation farmers, massive increased use of sugars to provide the energy source for microbes to grow in huge fermentation vats. (Many syn-bio companies are currently located in Brazil, a country with massive sugar production facilities).

Please know that the U.S. National Standards Organic Board is working hard on our behalf to prevent syn-bio products from entering the "organic" market place. Furthermore, it is reassuring to know that the Non GMO Project Verified folks are busily identifying food products that contain syn-bio chemicals and will soon be able to offer suitable replacement products labeled with their special Non GMO Project Verified logo. And, as always, shop for organic products in local food coops, farmers markets, even some big-box stores and restaurants.

For more information about syn-bio and how to avoid it, download the Shopper’s Guide to Synthetic Biology here.

Dr. Ramon Seidler is a former professor of microbiology and retired senior research scientist with the US EPA GMO Biosafety program.

Join Dr. Seidler Thursday, October 27th at the Fruitdale Grange in Grants Pass for Biotech Crops: An Evening With Ray Seidler, PH.D., where he will discuss What’s Here, What’s Coming, and Why Should You Care?

We hope you will support Our Family Farms as we work to create thriving communities by promoting and protecting family farms and traditional seeds from the threats of genetically engineered (GE) crops.