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SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND PUBLIC POLICY

February 28, 2001

FDA Commissioner Jane Henney  
Dockets Management Branch (HFA 305)  
Food and Drug Administration  
5630 Fisher's Lane, Room 1061  
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Commissioner Henney,

My comments are in reference to FDA dockets 00N-1396 and OOD-1598.

I find it completely unconscionable that the FDA had made the decision to allow genetically engineered foods to go on to the markets in this country without any pre-market safety testing or labeling. Can you guarantee that our children won't get cancer or our grandchildren won't have birth defects from genetically engineered foods? Are they safe for pregnant women? What about the millions of newborns who are fed infant formulas made with genetically engineered soybeans, or the millions of Americans who suffer from food allergies?

These concerns alone are enough to demand rigorous, long-term, pre-market safety testing. But genetic engineering doesn't just endanger the health of our families—many scientists believe that genetic engineering threatens our wildlife, alters natural habitats, creates dramatic imbalances in our environment and exposes the entire ecosystem to unanticipated and potentially uncontrollable side effects. Unlike chemical or nuclear contamination, gene pollution cannot be contained or cleaned up. The natural process of cross-pollination is already carrying genetically engineered organisms to neighboring fields and beyond, creating new, unknown and potentially harmful species.

And need I mention the StarLink corn disaster? How many mistakes like this, with a loss of millions of dollars to our farmers, will it take to wake up the FDA.

The reality is genetic engineering is too new and potentially too hazardous for any of us—consumers, scientists, farmers, government officials and corporate executives—to be in a hurry to take it out of the labs and put it onto our dinner tables.

The bottom line is that no one knows if these foods are safe, for us or our environment. You are turning the American people in to subjects in a highly controversial experiment, without our knowledge or consent. At the very least genetically engineered foods must be labeled so that we can choose for ourselves whether we will eat them or not.

A recent study by Novartis showed that 93% of Americans want genetically engineered foods labeled. The government must reverse its position and establish stringent pre-

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market safety testing on these foods, and keep them out of our fields and our kitchens until they are scientifically proven safe for our environment and our families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sally M. Peden".

Dr. Sally Peden