



# THE ORGANIC & NON-GMO REPORT

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Information to ensure a safe, healthy, and sustainable food supply

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Free Issue	In May, genetically modified sugar beet plants were found in a soil mix sold to gardeners at a landscape supply business in Corvallis, Oregon. The contamination incident raises doubts about the ability of the sugar beet seed industry to keep GM sugar beets from contaminating non-GMO sugar beets and related plants.
Subscribe	<b>Discovered in soil mix</b> The GM Roundup Ready sugar beet plants, called "specklings," were found in Fertile Mix, a soil mix called sold by Pro Bark. Business owners Jeff and Julie Jackson said they had no idea the plants were in the soil mix.
Advertise With Us	An unidentified individual purchased the mix, found the sugar beet specklings, and contacted Carol Mallory-Smith, a professor of weed science at Oregon State University. Smith took samples from 10 plants, tested those using protein-based GMO "strip" tests, and found that about half tested positive for the genetically modified Roundup Ready gene.
Sample Articles	Following the discovery, Pro Bark stopped selling Fertile Mix, but the Jacksons don't know how much of it had already been sold.
About the Editor	<b>"Extremely difficult to prevent pollen movement"</b> The source of the soil mix is in question. According to one report, a farmer sold the soil containing the specklings to a materials handling company who in turn sold it to Pro Bark. The farmer may have been growing the GM sugar beet specklings for seed and accidentally mixed the specklings with soil.
Books by the Editor	Seed for Roundup Ready sugar beets is produced in Oregon's Willamette Valley. In 2008, the first year of commercial production, an estimated 50% of the two million acre US sugar beet crop was GM.
	While Smith acknowledges that sugar beets have been grown in the Willamette Valley for many years, she also says, "I believe that it would be extremely difficult to prevent pollen movement."
	<b>"Cluster bomb with Roundup Ready beets"</b> The incident sounded alarms for Frank Morton, owner of Wild Garden Seeds. Morton's organic seed business faces a direct threat from GM sugar beets, which could cross pollinate with his table beets and swiss chard plants. Morton has spoken out about the contamination risk from GM beets and is a plaintiff in a lawsuit to force the US Department of Agriculture to conduct a thorough environmental and economic impact study of GM beets.
	"They screwed up. Right out of the gate you have problems. Nobody thought about leftover specklings. You can throw them on the ground and they will grow," he says.
	Morton fears that other people purchased the soil mix containing the GM sugar beet specklings and that these will take root and shed pollen near his farm, crossing with—and contaminating—his plants. He likens the situation to "a cluster bomb with Roundup Ready beets around Philomath (the location of Morton's farm). This is upwind of me and very close."
	<b>No discussion, no responsibility</b> Morton is frustrated because the two seed companies that could be responsible for the problem, West Coast Beet Seed and Betaseed, aren't saying anything. "No one has stepped forward to accept responsibility," he says.
	Greg Loberg of West Coast Beet Seed told the Corvallis Gazette-Times, which first broke the story, that he couldn't say anything because of the lawsuit.
	Morton contacted the Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association about the problem. "I told them this is trespass; I will make this an issue so they can't keep ignoring it. Somewhere along the line responsibility will be assigned," he says.

**Could help lawsuit**

Morton says the incident could help the lawsuit against the USDA over GM beets. Morton and other plaintiffs, including the Center for Food Safety, Sierra Club, Organic Seed Alliance, and High Mowing Organic Seeds, filed suit in a federal court in 2008, aiming to stop sales of GM sugar beet seed until the USDA examines the impacts of GM beets on the environment and on organic and non-GMO production. The case was scheduled to go to court this past May, but the presiding judge said he would issue a decision based on the written evidence. The judge's decision is expected any day.

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