

# The #gmpotato Community of Inquiry Project

EPA GMO Technology Conference:

The Regulation and Use of  
GMO Technology in Ireland

*Dublin Castle 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> October 2013*

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## What is #gmpotato?

#gmpotato is a place for people to debate the challenges and possibilities of genetically modified potatoes, and food technologies more generally, in Ireland.

Join in the debate using our forum or by commenting via facebook or twitter.

[MORE](#)

[www.gm-potato.com](http://www.gm-potato.com)

## #gmpotato Witnesses

See what our witnesses have to say, and have your say in our [forum](#) or by commenting via [facebook](#) or [twitter](#).

### **Witness #1 Derek Deane**

Derek is a Carlow farmer who has a specific interest in novel potato technologies. He fully supports the Teagasc potato trials. Derek is a prominent member of the Irish Farmers Association but he is speaking here in a personal capacity.



### Recent Posts

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- To facilitate public debate and dialogue between stakeholders involved in both the proposal of, and resistance to, the GM potato, as well as the wider public
- To enable a process of dialogue that informs policy and regulation on genetically modified organisms and future farming practice in Ireland
- To use the latest in communication research and practice in deliberative, democratic processes to analyse public and expert response to controversial technologies

- Where 'Mode-1 science' was once perceived as linear, de-contextualised, with follow-up technology emanating from the lone (male) scientist in the Victorian lab
- Where 'Mode-2 science' is now bound with technology that is socially distributed, application-oriented, trans-disciplinary, and subject to multiple accountabilities
- So far in Horizon 2020, responsible research and innovation (RRI) is defined as emerging, 'challenge'-based innovation that considers engagement, science education, ethics, governance, gender issues and open access

Nowotny, H. Scott, P. and Gibbons, M. 2001. *Re-thinking science: knowledge and the public in an age of uncertainty*. Cambridge, UK : Polity Press.

- Economic
- Environmental/ecological
- Progress / scientific
- Risk
- ‘Runaway’
- Social & public responsibility/regulatory
- Cultural
- Jobs

See Bauer and Gaskell (2002), Nisbet and Lewenstein (2002), Turney (1998), Eder (1996), Hornig-Priest (2006), Kohring and Matthes (2002), Carver et al (2008)



- Voluntary or imposed?
- Are we in control?
- A risk distributed fairly?
- Can we trust the risk claim-makers?
- Morally acceptable risk ?
- Familiar or new?
- 'Natural' or 'artificial'?
- Event-related?
- Does the risk fill us with (special) dread?

Sandman, P. and Lanard, J. 2005. Bird Flu: Communicating the Risk. *Perspectives on Health*. 10 (2), pp2-9.

- A random sample of the public was invited (n=300, 50:50 gender balance) from the Registry of Electors from various rural and urban Carlow districts (near the proposed GM potato field trial site at Oak Park)
- asked to participate in a 1-week online deliberation process with our expert presenters, each of whom are represented here in Youtube videos during a one week period
- 'citizens' jury' – at the end of the week a face-to-face meeting; the members of the public were 'jurors', while the expert presenters were 'witnesses'. All the while, our Celsius research team at DCU facilitated and monitored points of view, both from the deliberative process itself as well media opinion ('traditional' and online).



## CHARGE 1

- *Should Teagasc proceed with GM potato trials over the period of time under the terms of the AMIGA project, and under the EPA conditions?*

**Verdict : YES, but with critical conditions [8:2 in favour]**

## CHARGE 2

- *Independent of the Teagasc trials, should Ireland now begin to explore the development and distribution of genetically-modified foods and /or feed?*

**Verdict : YES, but with critical conditions [9:1 in favour]**

- **Monitoring** The current trial is too limited. Surrounding ecosystems are complex. An extended trial monitoring period beyond 4 years is required. Constant transboundary movement of genetic material and contamination risk assessment is vital.
- **Regulatory frameworks** Control, regulation, of multinationals and farmers' use is critical.
- **Communication** There has been a lack of communication throughout this process of application for, and subsequent trials of, GM potatoes. There was no wide knowledge of this until recently (as of Autumn 2012). The Carlow community should have been informed of this decision prior to the trial's commencement, and there should currently be more engagement with the public.
- **Dealing with interest group and public objections** Although letters of objection are displayed on the EPA website, there is no indication that the EPA responds in any way to these letters. In this GM potato trial objections process, 83 objections do not seem to carry any weight.

# The 'verdict' in more detail: views of the Carlow-based jury

# Critical Conditions: Action Recommendations for Charge # 1

- **Continuous monitoring**, indefinitely, after the 4 years of this project. It may not be possible under the current 4 year period, but other types of testing are required for other stages of monitoring eg health, environmental, public response.
- Strict criteria for an **'alarm bell' and 'stop' mechanism** – once there is a sign of something not fitting within health safety criteria etc , the project terminates immediately
- Regarding multinational control, **corporate exploitation needs to be carefully managed**. It is understood that commercialisation is necessary but a **'public good'** restriction should be included ensuring eg HEIs are involved for creation of knowledge at each stage of testing and research /development of GM potato, not just IP for financial gain
- **Targeted communication required, strategic and relevant**. There needs to be information exchange through various communication channels that prevents information overload or misguided communication. Teagasc needs to be involved in this but there was consensus that the EPA needs to take an active and leading role. There should be a system of response for evaluation based on quality and quantity of the general public letters of objections as well as expert letters, up to and including veto if necessary.

- **Exploration** The key word is 'explore' – there may be a necessity to explore GM technologies to assess all options for future farm practice and food and feed production. For Irish conditions, exploratory testing is necessary
- **Current GM** - GM food and feed is already here
- **Charge 2 is dependent on charge 1**
- **Clarity of who benefits** In the charge, when 'Ireland' is mentioned the questions is 'Which Ireland'? Are we talking about strategic technology interests exploring or others?
- We need to learn from EC and EU countries

- There needs to be **an independent review** of GM in Ireland. Review of where we are, how did we get to this situation? Where do we go next? This to include:
  - **international trends and actions** – and continuing from Food Harvest 2020 report, broadening out to a **consideration of economic, agricultural, environmental, health , public issues**
  - **transparent review of how GM application process works**, decision-making, GM studies in the pipeline, what happens in EC regarding results, outputs etc
  - independent assessment to establish **benefits to whom in society**, for Ireland but also globally, for use of technologies in the **developing world**
  - **Ireland's position and strategy for next 5 years** for food and feed, and technology **-competitiveness of Ireland** – dealing with the brand of Green Ireland Inc
  - **Labelling** issues of food and feed –clear guidelines



- There is a need for **forecasting**, scenarios presented to and with public about future possibilities and risks (organised by either Department , EPA or Teagasc). These should be built into consultation process eg future of organic food production v GM as 'best-case scenarios'.
- **MAIN ACTION RECOMMENDATION: An Ombudsman (for food safety, farm produce or agriculture) needs to be appointed, with the brief to include each action point from the independent review**