

# Green Mission News

March 2013 Green Mission News

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*“With Arctic ice melting, Australia on fire and increasing droughts, floods and extreme weather throughout the world, it’s past time to get serious about global warming.”*

- David Suzuki, January 31, 2013

## External Article Links:

- Scientist: Genetic engineering is based on dramatically incomplete knowledge  
[www.non-gmoreport.com/articles/february2013/genetic-engineering-based-on-incomplete-knowledge.php](http://www.non-gmoreport.com/articles/february2013/genetic-engineering-based-on-incomplete-knowledge.php)
- GMO Documentary Films: Educate Yourself with Movies about the GMO Food Debate  
[www.rosebudmag.com/truth-squad/gmo-documentary-films-educate-yourself-about-gmo-foods-debate](http://www.rosebudmag.com/truth-squad/gmo-documentary-films-educate-yourself-about-gmo-foods-debate)
- Triple harvest: California's Farmland conservation for climate protection, smart growth and food security  
[www.calclimateag.org](http://www.calclimateag.org)
- Community Alliance with Family Farmers  
[caff.org](http://caff.org)
- Animal Place compassion for all life  
[animalplace.org](http://animalplace.org)
- Preserve Open Space Close to Home  
[www.openspacetrust.org/index.html](http://www.openspacetrust.org/index.html)
- The Relationship of Sugar to Population-Level Diabetes Prevalence:  
[www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0057873](http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0057873)
- Some bee-harming pesticides could face ban: EU Commission  
[www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/25/us-eu-pesticides-idUSBRE90O0WM20130125](http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/25/us-eu-pesticides-idUSBRE90O0WM20130125)
- Working to achieve transformational change, WE MAKE CONNECTIONS.  
[www.11thhourproject.org](http://www.11thhourproject.org)

- IRRI: No Golden Rice in the next 2 years

<http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/gmo-news/news/en/27151.html>

The International Rice Research Institute, IRRI, based in the Philippines has corrected recent media stories that the 30 year old GM rice, which is supposed to provide beta carotene to vitamin A deficient mothers and children, was about to be planted and disseminated this year. The rice would only be commercialised if it was deemed safe and proven to actually improve the vitamin A status of its consumers. This was still to be proven: "This process may take another two years or more."

- International Rice Research Institute, Philippines (IRRI): Clarifying recent news about Golden Rice

[http://irri.org/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=12483:clarifying-recent-news-about-golden-rice&lang=en](http://irri.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=12483:clarifying-recent-news-about-golden-rice&lang=en)

- Serbian public debates genetically modified food ban

<http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/gmo-news/news/en/27161.html>

In order to join the World Trade Organisation, Serbia must change a 2008 law which prohibits producing or trafficking genetically modified foods on its territory. With membership in the organisation, Serbia can still ban production of foods with genetically modified organisms, but cannot ban import of it. While some have accepted the argument in favour of changing the law, many remain against genetically enhanced foods.

- Southeast European Times, Serbia: Serbian public debates genetically modified food

[http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/setimes/blogreview/2013/02/23/blog-03](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/blogreview/2013/02/23/blog-03)

- Coalition presses New Jersey to be first U.S. state to label GE food

[www.gmo-free-regions.org/gmo-news/news/en/27159.html](http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/gmo-news/news/en/27159.html)

A coalition of consumer and environmental groups is urging New Jersey to become the first state to require the labeling of genetically engineered foods. About 80 percent of corn and soybean crops are now grown with genetically modified seeds, but consumers aren't aware that's what they're eating, said Stephanie Harris with the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey. "The health risks today are not entirely known, and many consumers feel that they do not want to be the guinea pigs of the industry in order to find out, 20 years down the road, what the health risks are," she said.

- NewsWorks, USA: Coalition presses N.J. to be first state to label genetically engineered food

<http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/item/51356>

- Namibian GM-free maize products contaminated by GM maize

<http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/gmo-news/news/en/27146.html>

Maize meal sold in some shops in Namibia is derived from genetically modified organisms, a recent test has revealed. Moreover, unsuspecting Namibian consumers are being charged at least an 8 percent "GMO free premium" on maize products [...]

The test revealed Ace Instant porridge contains 56.82 percent GM maize while the popular White Star Maize contains 2.75 percent GM maize, and Top Score maize meal contains 1.09 percent GM maize. “The latter two are supposedly Namibia produced and are expected to have been GMO-free, but this is clearly not the case,” the NCT chairperson, Sandi Tjaronda, said at a media briefing yesterday.

- New Era, Namibia: We eat genetically modified maize products

<http://www.newera.com.na/articles/50516/We-eat-genetically-modified-maize-products>

- Informante, Namibia: Genetically modified maize on sale

[http://www.informante.web.na/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=11530:genetically-modified-maize-on-sale&catid=14:business&Itemid=101](http://www.informante.web.na/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11530:genetically-modified-maize-on-sale&catid=14:business&Itemid=101)

- U.S. Rep. Polis (Colorado) to announce GMO labeling bill

<http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/gmo-news/news/en/27138.html>

U.S. Rep. Jared Polis, D-Boulder, this week will announce his introduction of a bill that would require food containing genetically modified organisms to be clearly identified. “I am proud to help lead the GMO Labeling Bill, which is all about consumer choice and information,” Polis said in a news release. “It’s important to empower people with the information they need to make their own healthy choices. People have the right to make consumer decisions based on accurate transparency in labeling, and knowledge is power.” [...] “We were very honored his office called and asked if they could hold this press conference at Alfalfa’s,” said Mark Retzloff, president of Alfalfa’s. “Our company’s mission and beliefs resonate very closely with what Jared is doing.”

- Daily Camara, USA: Boulder Rep. Jared Polis to announce GMO labeling bill at Alfalfa's this week

[http://www.coloradodaily.com/ci\\_22614502/boulder-rep-jared-polis-announce-gmo-labeling-bill?source=most\\_viewed](http://www.coloradodaily.com/ci_22614502/boulder-rep-jared-polis-announce-gmo-labeling-bill?source=most_viewed)

- Boulder Jewish News, USA: Polis to hold Boulder meeting on GMO labeling

<http://boulderjewishnews.org/2013/polis-to-hold-boulder-meeting-on-gmo-labeling/>

- We're All Guinea Pigs

I don't want to expose the most precious people in my life to an endocrine disruptor.

[otherwords.org/were-all-guinea-pigs](http://otherwords.org/were-all-guinea-pigs)

- David Suzuki: The baffling response to Arctic climate change

[www.davidsuzuki.org/blogs/science-matters/2013/01/the-baffling-response-to-arctic-climate-change/](http://www.davidsuzuki.org/blogs/science-matters/2013/01/the-baffling-response-to-arctic-climate-change/)

- Frances Moore Lappé: What India Taught Me About How to End Hunger

Back in the '60s, Frances Moore Lappé realized that hunger is caused by a scarcity of democracy, not food. Then, a collective of courageous women farmers showed her how to change that.

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/ending-hunger-how-communities-are-taking-life-into-their-own-hands>

- Saving Little Pieces of Our Earth (13 min video)

[www.oregonmetro.gov/index.cfm/go/by.web/id=28609](http://www.oregonmetro.gov/index.cfm/go/by.web/id=28609)

### Record-High Antibiotic Sales for Meat and Poultry

[www.pewhealth.org/other-resource/record-high-antibiotic-sales-for-meat-and-poultry-production-85899449119](http://www.pewhealth.org/other-resource/record-high-antibiotic-sales-for-meat-and-poultry-production-85899449119)

### - Cradle to Cradle Technology and Industrial Hemp

[www.mauijungalow.com/2013/01/cradle-to-cradle-technology-and.html](http://www.mauijungalow.com/2013/01/cradle-to-cradle-technology-and.html)

### - Shifting The Unshifting – The Course Of Social Innovation

<http://www.socialentrepreneurguide.com/shifting-the-unshifting-the-course-of-social-innovation>

### - AquAdvantage Salmon: A Heckuva Drug

[civileats.com/2013/01/09/aquadvantage-salmon-a-heckua-drug/](http://civileats.com/2013/01/09/aquadvantage-salmon-a-heckua-drug/)

### - Secret Social Entrepreneur | Many social enterprises are critically ill

<http://socialenterprise.guardian.co.uk/social-enterprise-network/2013/feb/11/secret-social-entrepreneur-enterprises-critically-ill>

### - SEED GIANTS VS. U.S. FARMERS (Center for Food Safety report)

[www.centerforfoodsafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Seed-Giants\\_final.pdf](http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Seed-Giants_final.pdf)

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## Full Length Articles Below:

- Don't Put a Fork in It

- Quinoa: To Buy or Not to Buy... Is This the Right Question?

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*Published on Friday, February 15, 2013 by [Common Dreams](#)*

## Quinoa: To Buy or Not to Buy... Is This the Right Question?

by [Tanya Kerssen](#)

We've been hearing a lot about quinoa lately. While US consumers prize it as a delicious 'super-food,' there is growing anxiety about the impact of the quinoa boom in the Andes, and particularly Bolivia, the world's top producing country. The media has focused primarily on the fact that global demand is driving up the price of quinoa, placing it beyond the reach of poor Bolivians—even of quinoa farmers themselves—leaving them to consume nutritionally vacuous, but cheap, refined wheat products such as bread and pasta. By this logic, some suggest, northern consumers should boycott the 'golden grain' to depress its price and make it accessible once again.

Others point out that the impoverished farmers of Bolivia's highlands are at long last getting a fair price for their crop—one of the few crops adapted to their arid, high altitude environment. In this view, global markets are finally “working” for peasants, and a consumer boycott would only hurt the hemisphere's poorest farmers.

In short, the debate has largely been reduced to the invisible hand of the marketplace, in which the only options for shaping our global food system are driven by (affluent) consumers either buying more or buying less. It's the same logic that makes us feel like we've done our civic duty by buying a pound of fair trade coffee. This isn't to dismiss the many benefits of fair trade or other forms of ethical consumption, but the so-called quinoa quandary demonstrates the limits of consumption-driven politics. Because whichever way you press the lever (buy more/buy less) there are bound to be negative consequences, particularly for poor farmers in the Global South. To address the problem we have to analyze the system itself, and the very structures that constrain consumer and producer choices.

Women weighing a bag of quinoa in a local market in Batallas, Bolivia. (Photo: Noah Friedman-Rudovsky for The New York Times)

The rising demand for quinoa is indeed contributing to higher prices, which have tripled in the last six years. But even more troubling than the price impact on Bolivian quinoa consumption, is the impact on land use. Quinoa production is expanding at a break-neck pace in one of the most vulnerable ecosystems on the planet: the fragile soils and native pastures of the Bolivian high plateau (Altiplano). These lands were once carefully managed with fallow (rest) periods of eight years or more. Now many areas are in near-constant production, threatening to destroy the soil's fertility. The llama herds that have provided manure to fertilize subsistence quinoa plots for millennia have dwindled to make way for large quinoa monocultures. Government programs are doling out tractors, and this mechanization is allowing for the cultivation of larger and larger fields.

In a public ceremony in early February, President Evo Morales presented 65 John Deere tractors to communities in the highland department of Oruro to promote the expansion of quinoa. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) announcement that 2013 would be named the International Year of Quinoa goes hand in glove with this big push for mechanization.

Meanwhile, sand storms are increasingly common in the southern Altiplano, an indicator of the progressive desertification of the region. Desertification—characterized by saline soils, loss of nutrients, erosion and decreasing yields—is triggered by the increased mechanization of farming practices, as well as a disruption of the delicate balance between pastoralism and agriculture. Whereas quinoa was once grown primarily on small hillside terraces, it is now moving into large areas formerly dedicated to llama grazing. In so doing, it is wiping out the high biodiversity of native pastures, shrublands (*tholares*) and wetlands (*bofedales*)—a diversity necessary for this system's sustainability and resilience to climate change.

So while no one would argue that Bolivian farmers *shouldn't* get a good price for their crop, these trends cannot be ignored—or left up to global market forces. Perhaps most tragic of all is that this boom (and booms are always followed by a bust) is leading the

poorest, most vulnerable farmers to degrade their own environment—i.e. the material basis for their very survival and cultural identity—in the name of short-term food security.

Peasants everywhere tend to have an intimate and reciprocal relationship with the natural world—known in the Andes as Pachamama. When this relationship begins to break down, it's usually because peasants have few or no options. What's missing from most northern media accounts of quinoa is a discussion of what the range of possible options might look like—that is, beyond the two unsavory extremes of dismal poverty on the one hand, and environmental destruction (invariably leading back to dismal poverty) on the other.

One of the rarely discussed alternative paths is agrarian reform. Bolivia, like most Latin American countries, has a highly unequal distribution of land, with thousands of farmers eking out a living on tiny highland plots, while wealthy elites (including many foreign investors) control enormous lowland plantations, primarily dedicated to export-oriented soy and sugarcane. Over the last few decades, this inequality has generated waves of rural migrants from highland regions to the lowlands, including tropical coca-growing areas, and to the swelling outskirts of cities like La Paz and Santa Cruz. It's also fed a growing landless movement, now organized as the Bolivian MST (landless worker movement), modeled on the Brazilian example. This movement is actively pushing the Bolivian government to make good on its agrarian reform promises, as a solution to rural poverty and degradation.

Another option—and these are not mutually exclusive—would be to rebuild local food markets that have been decimated by decades of nefarious U.S. aid and trade policies. Might we envision a future in which cheap, highly subsidized U.S. wheat products don't pour into Bolivia, directly undercutting producers of Andean foods in their *own* markets? This would require, of course, the political will and capacity to regulate imports (admittedly, import dependence and dietary changes are difficult things to undo). It would also require support for small farmers *not only* in producing commodities for export but, more importantly, for producing a wide variety of plants and animals for domestic consumption, in a way that is suitable to local ecologies. This is actually something Andean peasants are spectacularly good at—having produced food for thousands of years in one of the most diverse and challenging environments on earth.

Bolivia has a number of laws in place (such as the recently passed Law for Mother Earth, Integrated Development and 'Living Well') demonstrating that political will exists on the part of President Evo Morales to promote food sovereignty and peasant production for local markets. But as University of California, Berkeley agroecologist Miguel Altieri notes:

Discourse must now translate into action. A starting point would be to capitalize on the sustainable peasant production strategies that have stood the test of time—mobilizing indigenous knowledge and ancestral practices (use of animal manure, rotations and fallows, terrace construction, etc.) and spreading these experiences through horizontal, farmer to farmer exchanges.

So while there is no easy solution to the quinoa quandary—much less a solution driven

by northern consumers—the issue has generated an important debate about our global food system. At its core, it's a debate about which strategies are most effective for creating a just and sustainable food system. And consumption-driven strategies, while part of the toolbox for effecting change, are not the *only* tools. Only by facing the reality that we can't consume our way to a more just and sustainable world—and examining the full range of political options and strategies—can we start coming up with real solutions.

*Tanya Kerssen is Research Coordinator at [Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy](#) and the author of the book [Grabbing Power: The New Struggles for Land, Food and Democracy in Northern Honduras](#) (Food First Books 2013).*

# # #

## Don't Put a Fork in It

**Despite consumer opposition, the FDA is one step away from approving genetically engineered salmon.**

By [Wenonah Hauter](#)  
[otherwords.org/dont-put-a-fork-in-it/](http://otherwords.org/dont-put-a-fork-in-it/)

While most Americans were enjoying the holiday season or stressing out over the nation's imminent leap off the so-called fiscal cliff, the Food and Drug Administration delivered some big news as quietly as possible.

On December 21, the agency announced that AquaBounty's genetically engineered salmon had [cleared the final hurdle](#) before clinching FDA approval.

Despite insufficient testing and widespread consumer opposition, AquaBounty's food experiment is dangerously close to becoming the first genetically engineered animal produced for human consumption. Yes, a newfangled fish may soon land on a dinner plate near you.

For those who have been following this news for the past several years, the timing of the FDA's release of its draft environmental assessment — the Friday before Christmas — was no surprise. But the news was still frightening: The FDA may give this transgenic animal the green light under a new approval process that [treats the fish as an "animal drug."](#)

Prefer your salmon without those eel genes spliced into its DNA? Pay close attention because this frankenfish may hit the market without any sort of label.

It seems that AquaBounty and the FDA don't believe consumers deserve the right to know whether the fish we eat is genetically engineered. Those who have demanded labeling for genetically engineered food will be unable to identify this transgenic salmon from standard farm-raised varieties.



## Fishy Genes, an OtherWords cartoon by Khalil Bendib

Not only does this ignore our fundamental right to know what we are putting on our plates, it's also a bad business decision. It's entirely possible that many Americans will avoid purchasing *any* salmon for fear it is genetically engineered.

AquaBounty, the biotech company responsible for bringing us this fishy salmon, [used its own data to convince the FDA](#) that it is safe to eat. But AquaBounty's profits are inextricably linked to approval of this salmon. It's outrageous that the FDA would take AquaBounty's word over that of dozens of lawmakers and scientists, including experts at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Fish and Wildlife Service, not to mention thousands of concerned consumers.

The FDA has the difficult task of protecting consumer safety, but it's hard to take it seriously when it comes to genetically engineered salmon. So far, they've failed to conduct the appropriate studies to determine if the fish is safe to eat. Independent scientists have skewered the FDA's process, noting that serious environmental concerns have not been examined while food safety issues related to [hormone levels](#) and [allergies](#) have been glossed over.

Even AquaBounty's claim of faster [growth rates is suspect](#). The company hasn't yet demonstrated that its transgenic salmon can grow faster than salmon without its new traits. And that's the whole reason they say it should be approved. SalmoBreed AS, a Norwegian company specializing in the selective breeding of Atlantic salmon, has directly challenged AquaBounty on this point.

By releasing an environmental assessment instead of a more thorough environmental impact statement, the FDA has failed to fully consider the threat this controversial new fish could pose to wild fish populations.

While the FDA is close to approving genetically engineered salmon for consumers, Congress can still keep them from unleashing this dangerous experiment. Consumers don't have million-dollar accounts with K Street lobbyists, but we do have a powerful



voice of opposition, one that has effectively put the brakes on this untested laboratory experiment for more than two years. Members of Congress are speaking out against this controversial fish. Let your elected officials know you don't want this Frankenfish on your plate. Visit [FoodandWaterwatch.org](http://FoodandWaterwatch.org) to find out how.

*Wenonah Hauter is the executive director of Food & Water*