

Media release



## **“Set limits to biotech!”**

New Testbiotech project expands the debate to the future of genetically engineered organisms

**26 January 2017 / Testbiotech has started a brand new project under the heading “Set limits to biotech!”. We will be providing answers to a whole range of questions about biotech, using illustrations and citing examples. The project will, in addition, provide critical analysis and present a set of political demands. Besides including information on the kind of genetically engineered organisms that are likely to be developed in the near future, we will be showing what we need to do to protect our health and the environment. Other topics will include ways of strengthening ethical boundaries and how new methods of genetic engineering need to be regulated.**

The project starts off with genetically engineered apples, fish and insects produced by the US company, Intrexon. This is a company whose market strategies are largely investor-driven, and which typifies current developments and the business climate. Aiming to aggressively introduce its genetically engineered organisms to the markets is an integral part of its company policy.

“At present, discussions on the introduction of new genetically engineered organisms are largely shaped by interests of the biotech industry. Undeniably, the influence of the biotech industry on research, politics and media has seen a significant increase in recent years,” says Christoph Then for Testbiotech. “Our new initiative provides a platform for informed and critical debate, and we hope that the public will take full advantage of this opportunity.”

Developments in the biotech industry are moving fast. In 2016, we saw the first commercial harvest of genetically engineered apples. There has already been an announcement that the apples will be sold in US supermarkets in 2017. They will still look fresh after being sliced even if they are not. There are currently plans for planting more than half a million of these apple trees. The apples can be marketed in the US and Canada with no mandatory form of labelling, and there is a chance that the free trade agreement CETA will pave their way into the EU. The effect on pollinators once these trees are planted is unknown, as is the impact on human health from eating these apples. None of these impacts were investigated in sufficient detail.

The genetically engineered salmon are destined initially for the North American market. However, there are already plans to release genetically engineered fruit- and olive flies in Europe. If these plans are implemented, it would become more or less impossible to control the spread of the genetically engineered insects in the environment, or prevent negative impacts on the ecosystem.

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The Testbiotech campaign: <https://www.testbiotech.org/en/limits-to-biotech>