

PRESS RELEASE

Halifax Forum to Discuss Genetically Modified Fish U.S and Canadian panel to present on the risks of GM Atlantic salmon

Halifax, October 26, 2011 – Tonight at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, U.S. and Canadian campaigners will speak about the risks associated with the potential introduction of genetically modified (GM, also called genetically engineered) Atlantic salmon and the role that Newfoundland and Labrador can play in protecting global fisheries from this threat.

“Nova Scotia’s marine and coastal environments are already under pressure. Commercial fisheries and endangered wild Atlantic Salmon populations are facing enough challenges without having to deal with additional unknowns and risks associated with genetically modified Atlantic salmon,” said Rob Johnson, Sustainable Seafood and Aquaculture Coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax. “This event is a unique opportunity to learn more about an important issue that could directly affect Nova Scotia.”

The small US company AquaBounty is proposing to use PEI as the global supplier of GM salmon eggs. The company is currently seeking approval from the US government to supply US consumers with GM Atlantic salmon that is grown out in Panama, from eggs produced in PEI. After 10 years, the U.S. government appears close to approving the salmon for human consumption.

“There is global alarm over this GM fish because the stakes are huge. The future of wild Atlantic salmon is at risk,” said Lucy Sharratt of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network who will be part of the Monday night panel, “The people of Nova Scotia could play a strong role in protecting Canadian and global fisheries from this genetically modified Atlantic salmon.”

The Halifax event will also include Eric Hoffman, Biotechnology Policy Campaigner at Friends of the Earth U.S. in Washington DC and Jaydee Hanson, Senior Policy Analyst at the Center for Food Safety, also from Washington DC. Leo Broderick, Vice Chair of Council of Canadians and a PEI resident will also join the panel.

“Fish escapes happen and we know the consequences can be devastating to native wild salmon populations. If we open this door to genetically engineered fish, we cannot close it,” said Eric Hoffman of Friends of the Earth U.S., “We cannot regulate how and where these fish will be grown in other countries. If we allow GM fish production, we will strike yet another blow against our severely endangered wild fisheries.”

“The U.S. process for reviewing the GM fish is deeply flawed,” said Jaydee Hanson, “We are very troubled that the company’s data is of such poor quality and actually points to a number of health problems. After more than 15 years, the company has produced surprisingly weak science.”

“We in PEI have a responsibility to make sure we never become the global supplier of genetically modified salmon eggs. We need the support of the people of Nova Scotia,” said Leo Broderick.

The Wednesday October 26 forum called “Genetically Modified Atlantic Salmon: Atlantic Canada is at the centre of the global controversy over GM fish” will take place at 7:00 PM. Other panel events were held in Charlottetown and Fredericton, with a Thursday night event in St. John’s.

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