

Mexico educating Canada on science of GMO restrictions:

We ask that International Trade Canada listen, learn, and act to support Mexico's science-based approach

The Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development

mary.ng@parl.gc.ca

CC: The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, minister_ministre@agr.gc.ca

April 12th, 2023

Dear Minister Ng;

On March 7, 2023 (a day after a similar U.S. request was made) Canada asked for formal consultations with Mexico over the country's restrictions on genetically modified agricultural imports. Canada's International Trade Ministry has been quoted in the media as stating that Mexico needs to take a 'science-based' approach to the issue of putting restrictions on agriculture produced using biotechnology.

On March 29, the Mexican government responded to Canada's flawed 'science-based' charge with an [impressive virtual conference](#) organized by CONACYT, the Mexican government's highest science body. We understand that, in addition to this webinar, CONACYT is planning a series of virtual conferences in May to present the full range of scientific evidence. We ask that the department review these webinars.

An article by Senior Advisor Timothy A. Wise from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, contains [some key points \(in English\)](#) made by panelists who spoke at the March 29 Mexican 'Webinario'. That article should help encourage Canadian International Trade Ministry's staff lacking Spanish to delve into the latest science about glyphosate and GMOs.

Scientist Alejandro Espinoza Calderón, director of Mexico's biosecurity agency Cibiogem, explains in the virtual conference, "Mexico has a rich store of exceptionally healthy varieties of corn. It is alarming to find that 90 percent of tortillas were shown to have traces of both glyphosate and transgenics."

As Tim Wise explains, "The message from scientific experts on the panel was clear: There are documented health risks from exposure to glyphosate, including in children and even newborns, and there is sufficient evidence of the potential health risks associated with consuming large quantities of minimally processed GM corn, which also may contain glyphosate residues. These justify Mexico's precautionary policies".

As stated in [our March 23 Letter to you](#), we are concerned that Canada is not implementing 'science-based' decision-making domestically in relation to the safety of GMOs and herbicides.

Instead, the federal government, via proposed regulatory guidance on gene edited seeds, is moving towards a complete reliance on unseen corporate safety assessments and confidential corporate science, without independent government oversight. This approach jeopardizes food safety, our environment, and the livelihood of many Canadian farmers.

A recent press report indicates that Canada has indicated a concern about Mexico's lack of respect for CUSMA (Canada-U.S.-Mexico trade agreement) which, if unchecked, could carry over to an industry like mining, where Canada has much more at stake. We reiterate that CUSMA does not oblige any country to approve a GMO that is approved in another country. The timing of Canada's March 7 request for formal consultations with Mexico can only be interpreted as a 'piling-on' in support of the U.S. government, industry and commodity groups seeking to end Mexico's plans for phasing out GM corn and glyphosate. This action by Canada is both short-sighted, and disrespectful.

Short-sighted - because, as Wise explains, "U.S. allegations that Mexico was not basing its policies on science were always a smokescreen. The (Mexican) science agency has for years maintained [a public web page](#) with annotated references on studies that document risks of both glyphosate and GM corn consumption, as well as the additional risk to native varieties from cross-pollination by GM corn".

Disrespectful - because, in dealing with the issue of maize production in North America, Canada is backing the short track record of chemical companies gene editing for profit, as opposed to Mexico known for 9000 years as the 'centre of origin' with the greatest diversity of maize types known to the world.

Mexico has plenty of sound science on its side, and the text of the trade agreement is quite explicit in recognizing each country's right to regulate in the ways it sees fit. We renew our call for Canada to support Mexico in its scientifically based phaseout of glyphosate and GMO corn used for human consumption, while considering similar action in Canada.

Sincerely,

- Council of Canadians (CAN)
- GMO Free Canada (CAN)
- Climate Legacy (CAN)
- Public Service Alliance of Canada (CAN)
- Northumberland Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Peterborough-Kawarthas Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Kitchener-Waterloo Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- London Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Regina Chapter of the Council of Canadians (SASK)

- Mid-Island - Nanaimo Chapter of the Council of Canadians (BC)
- Avalon Chapter of the Council of Canadians (NL)
- Powell River Chapter of the Council of Canadians (BC)
- North Shore Chapter of the Council of Canadians (NS)
- Quinte Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Kitchissippi-Ottawa Valley Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Guelph Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Ottawa Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Campbell River Chapter of the Council of Canadians (BC)
- Hamilton Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Fredericton Chapter of the Council of Canadians (NB)
- Edmonton Chapter of the Council of Canadians (AB)
- GE Free Comox Valley (BC)
- Toronto Non-GMO Coalition (ON)
- Environment Haliburton (ON)
- Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CAN)