



Ireland

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5. EUROPÄISCHE KONFERENZ DER GENTECHNIKFREIEN REGIONEN
5th EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON GMO-FREE REGIONS



FOOD AND DEMOCRACY

IRELAND AS A GMO-FREE
BIOSAFETY RESERVE
FOR EUROPE

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GMO-FREE

IRELAND AS A GMO-FREE BIOSAFETY RESERVE FOR EUROPE

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FOOD & DEMOCRACY
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IRELAND AS A GMO-FREE BIOSAFETY RESERVE FOR EUROPE

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
2. 1,000 LOCAL GMO-FREE ZONES
3. GM-FREE ISLAND POLICY
4. BIOSAFETY RESERVE
5. SUPPORT

1. Historical background

1995: Genetic Concern launches Ireland's first anti-GM campaign.

1997: Centre-right Fianna Fail political party issues strong anti-GM pre-election policy.

1998: After entering government, Fianna Fail makes policy U-turn in favour of GMO food and farming.

1998: Ireland plays leading role promoting GMOs in EU until 2007.

1998: GM sugar beet field trials ended by protestors. Genetic Concern campaign ends after Monsanto lawsuit.

2004: EU-wide de facto embargo lifted by Irish European Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, David Byrne.

2004: Ireland becomes big importer of GM animal feed.

2004: GM-free Ireland Network launch.

2005: GM-free Ireland declares 1,000 GMO-free zones - Survey finds vast majority oppose GM food and farming.

2006: BASF forced to abandon plans for big field trial of GMO potatoes.

2006: Green Ireland Conference calls for Ireland to be GM-free zone.

2007: June — Government adopts GM-free zone policy goal and stops voting in favour of GMOs at EU level.

2008: Irish and Northern Ireland Agriculture Ministers confirm GM-free policy goal.

2009: Irish Cattle and Sheepfarmers Association calls for GM-free label for meat, poultry and dairy produce.

2009: April — Government has still not introduced any legislation to implement policy.

1. Historical background

2006: BASF GM potato experiment cancelled

□



1. Historical background

2006: Green Ireland Conference promotes GM-free zone



2. GMO-free zones

ESSENTIAL GM-FREE ZONES

The majority of Irish citizens oppose the release of GM seeds, crops, trees, fish, crustaceans and livestock.

But the European Commission does not recognise the democratic right of Member States to have blanket bans on GM crops.

So in 2005, we created this map to indicate the most essential areas which require protection from GM contamination.

Note: circle at right of map indicates proven contamination distance for GM rape seed (26km radius).



2. GMO-free zones

ESSENTIAL GM-FREE ZONES

Natura 2000 sites



2. GMO-free zones

ESSENTIAL GM-FREE ZONES

Natura 2000 sites
+
Special Areas of Conservation



2. GMO-free zones

ESSENTIAL GM-FREE ZONES

Natura 2000 sites
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Special Areas of Conservation
+
GMO-free farm townlands



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2. GMO-free zones

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Special Areas of Conservation
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GMO-free farm townlands
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GMO-free food producers
+
Pro GMO-free restaurants



2. GMO-free zones

ESSENTIAL GM-FREE ZONES

Natura 2000 sites
+
Special Areas of Conservation
+
GMO-free farm townlands
+
GMO-free food producers
+
Pro GMO-free restaurants
+
GMO-free cities and towns

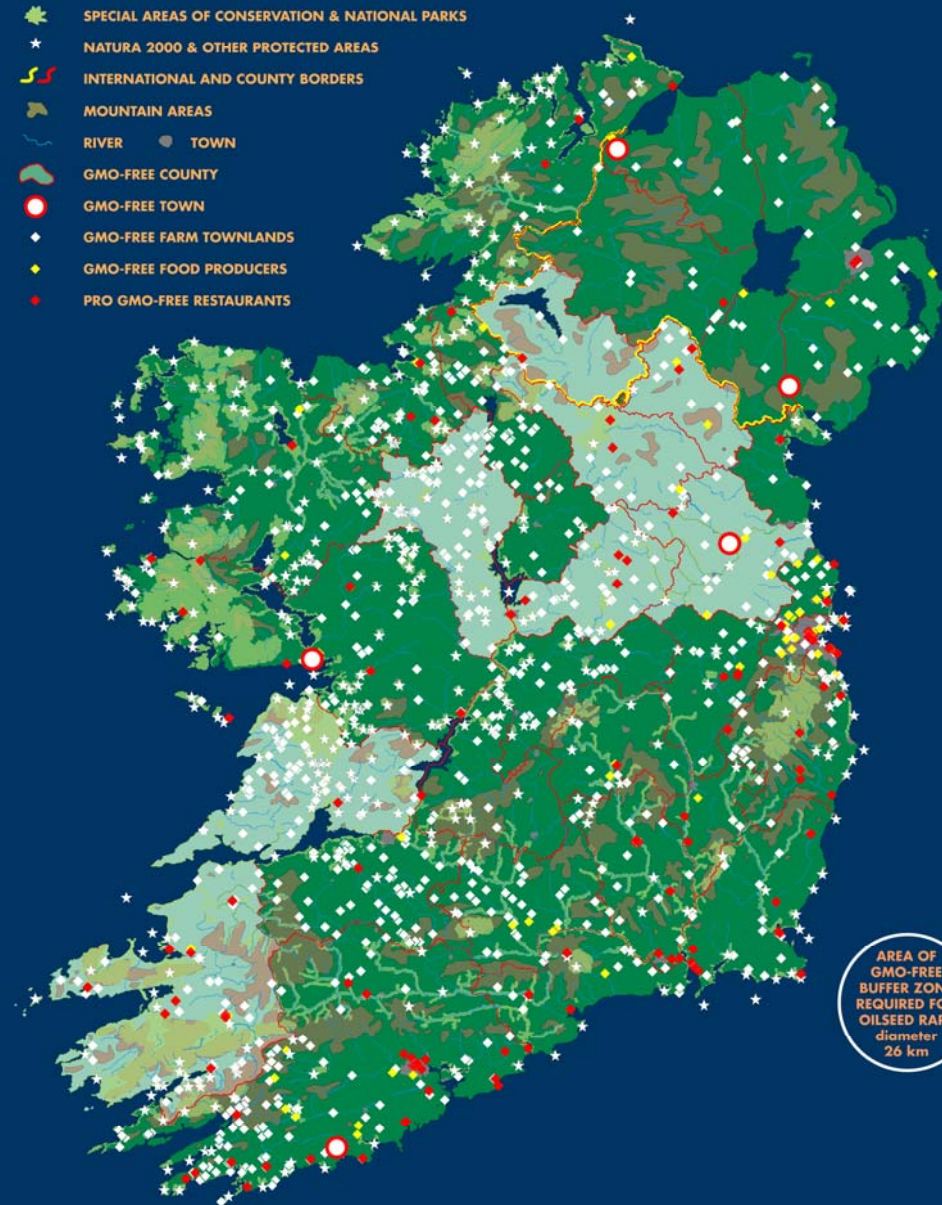


2. GMO-free zones

ESSENTIAL GM-FREE ZONES

Natura 2000 sites
+
Special Areas of Conservation
+
GMO-free farm townlands
+
GMO-free food producers
+
Pro GMO-free restaurants
+
GMO-free cities and towns
+
GMO-free counties
including Co. Kildare not shown
on this map

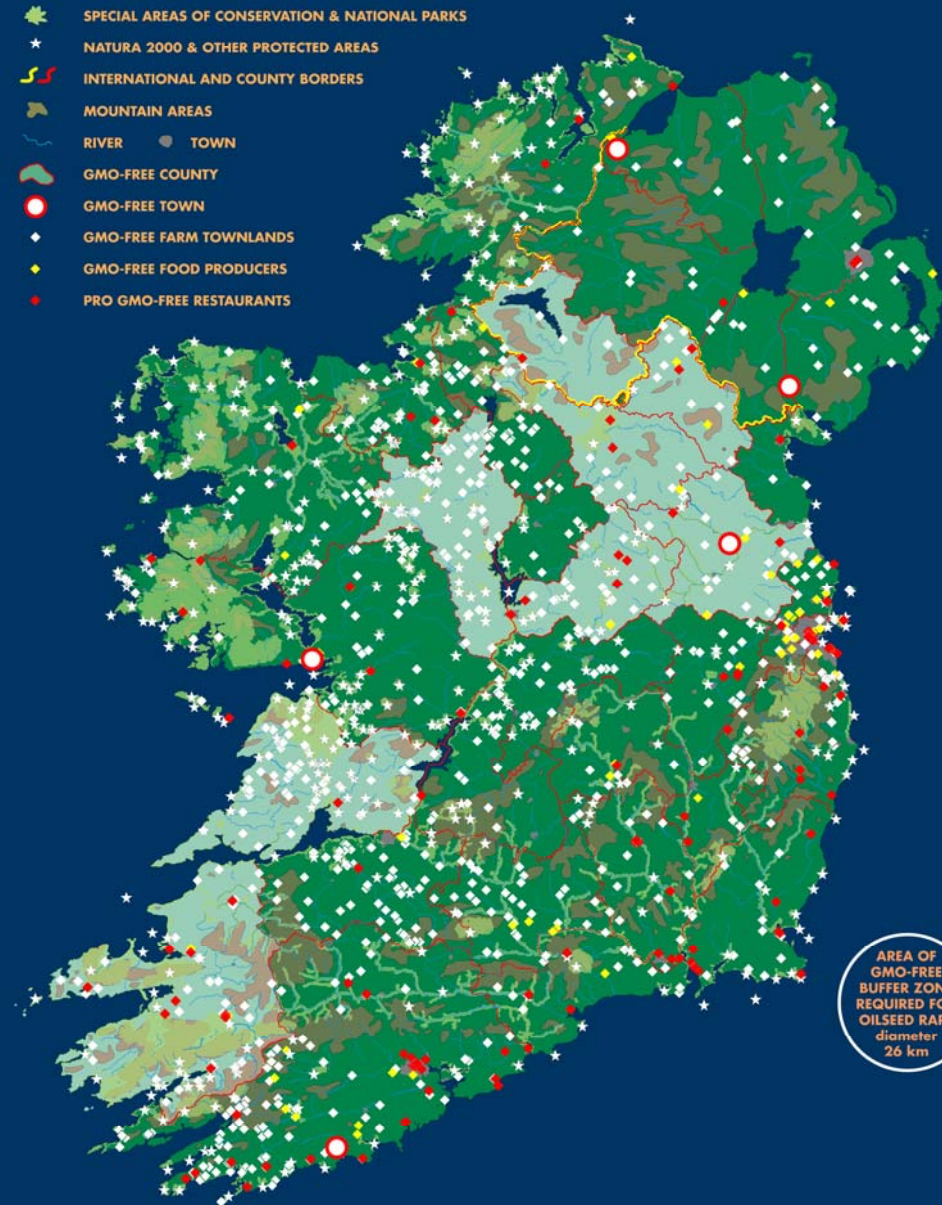
LOCAL AUTHORITY-DECLARED
GM-FREE ZONES
NOW REPRESENT
OVER 1 MILLION CITIZENS



2. GMO-free zones

NO SPACE FOR GM CROPS

Taking GM rapeseed as the example (and assuming this would only spread in a 26km radius), this map shows there is not enough space on this island for anyone to grow GM crops without contaminating many of the 1,000 GMO-free zones already declared by farmers and local authorities.



2. GMO-free zones

Recommended declaration for local authorities

**[Name of Local Authority] hereby passes
a GMO-free Zone motion with the following objectives:**

- To protect the interests of landowners, farmers, food producers, tourism operators, consumers and future generations by prohibiting any field trial, experimental or commercial release of genetically modified (GM) seeds, crops, trees, insects, crustaceans, fish, poultry and livestock in this jurisdiction;
- To exclude Local Authority funding for the procurement of food containing GM ingredients in schools, hospitals, nursing homes, canteens etc.; and
- To prevent the transportation, storage, and use of live GMO seeds, crops, trees, insects, crustaceans, fish, poultry and livestock on its land, water, and airspace (including GMO seeds and crops approved by the EU only for animal feed or agrofuel).
- This motion DOES NOT affect the use of animal feed containing GM ingredients or the use of live GMOs in sealed secure laboratories for the production of medicines etc.

3. GM-free island policy

Irish Government statement, June 2007:

“The Government seeks to negotiate to declare the island of Ireland as a GM-free zone”.

Comments:

- Aspirational policy goal = non-binding.
- Negotiation partners = Northern Ireland Assembly and EC.
- No effect on GM animal feed imports.
- Massive contra-propaganda in pro-GM farm media.
- Most policy makers fundamentally ignorant of GM issues.
- Rare Irish media coverage generally has strong pro-GM bias.
- Government fails to communicate policy to farming community...

3. GM-free island policy

The animal feed problem: over-reliance on imports:

ANNUAL IMPORTS 2006 - 2007 (metric tonnes)

PRODUCT	2006	2007	% GM in 2005
SOYA & SOYA BY-PRODUCTS	454,828	607,367	95 %
CITRUS PULP	356,809	403,921	
MAIZE BY-PRODUCTS	781,823	395,525	95 %
MAIZE	108,961	211,542	95 % ?
WHEAT & WHEAT BY-PRODUCTS	470,118	378,001	
RAPE & RAPE BY-PRODUCTS	177,569	239,072	
SUGAR RELATED PRODUCTS	246,702	204,040	
PALM KERNEL	145,528	155,668	
SORGHUM	0	93,300	
BARLEY & BARLEY BY-PRODUCTS	194,028	89,172	
OTHERS	79,220	83,005	
SUNFLOWER	81,336	64,701	
TOTALS	3,096,992	2,925,314	

3. GM-free island policy

The animal feed problem:

95% of imported soy meal and maize gluten are GM

- Ireland continues to be one of the biggest importers of GM feed in the EU,
- World's 4th largest beef producer, EU's largest.
- 6.9 million cows, 3.9 million sheep, 1.5 million pigs
- Most pig production = factory farming with high levels of GM feed.
- 500,000 tonnes of livestock and dairy exports per annum, mostly to EU countries.

Imports include thousands of tonnes of unapproved GM

Unreliable testing for illegal GM content

- "Since April 2004 all feed imports have been subjected to inspection for accuracy of GM labelling and very high levels of compliance have been detected."
— Mary Coughlan, Whilst Minister for Agriculture and Food in December 2006
- "Imported animal feed is only tested for GM content on a **random basis**."
— Liam Hyde, Animal Feedingstuffs Section
Department of Agriculture and Food, December 2006

3. GM-free island policy

The animal feed problem:

GM agri-biotech propaganda disseminated in Irish media:

- Government policy aims to stop all GM feed imports
- EU “zero tolerance policy” will create farming crisis
- Alternative Non-GM feed unavailable and/or unaffordable
- GM feed the only choice!
- Government policy will create agricultural collapse

Why did government fail to respond to propaganda?

Result: 2 out of 3 farming groups oppose GM-free policy

But:

- Rising soy and maize prices driving trend toward more grass-based diet.
- Most poultry processors want non-GMO feed, but recent supply problems are forcing many to use GM.
- Only just over 1% of farmland is organic. National target is 5% by 2012.
- Non-GMO feed shortage forcing some conventional farmers to buy organic feed.
- Organic sector boom leading some conventional farmers to go organic.

3. GM-free island policy

High potential for transition to non-GM animal feed

Irish farmers and food processors who phase out the use of GM ingredients can secure an instant competitive advantage over their foreign competitors, for the following reasons:

- **Very low GM content in feed rations for cattle, sheep and poultry**

- **Cattle diet:**

- 86 - 90% grass-based diet • 10-14% compound feed
of which only 30-50% is GM maize and soy products
GM feed = approx. 3 - 7% of total

- **Sheep diet:**

- 40% eat only grass-based diet • 60% get compound feeds
of which 15-17% soy & maize
GM feed = approx. 9 - 10% of total

- **Easier transition to GM-free feed than many other EU competitors**

- **Untapped potential: Unique selling point & competitive advantage**

**GM-free crop zone + Non-GM feed + clean green food island image
= most credible safe GM-free food brand in Europe.**

3. GM-free island policy

Irish Minister of State for Food and Horticulture Trevor Sargent (Green Party):

“The whole GM debate is at the heart of sustainability and the empowerment of people to grow food. If that power is taken away – and the corporate spin is certainly very strong in the direction of some kind of silver bullet being available through GM – we'll have gone beyond the point from which it's very difficult to come back.

We are in this generation holding a very important responsibility. When we look at the experience of farmers – and I think it's important to talk to farmers rather than to their corporate masters and their professionally-paid spin doctors – the farmers are saying GM is not the panacea for them. Whether you go to the universities which have been carrying out these studies, they tell you that farmers have been experiencing not greater but less yield, losing money, and losing market share. The exact opposite of the spin that is being put out.

And that's before we talk about the health risks, the superweeds, the fossil fuel dependency - we have to move on from our short-term flirtation with fossil fuels, they are not going to be around to get us out of this particular hole that we have dug for ourselves.

The option for us in Ireland is very clear: *Ireland – the food island*. We can sell that! Anywhere you go where our main markets are, they want that green clean food island. How about if Bord Bia [the Irish Food Board] tries to sell Ireland – the GM laboratory? I wonder how that would go down? That would be the end! We have to negotiate the establishment of Ireland as a GM-free zone. And that means live GMOs, that means release.”

— Slow Food / Terra Madre Ireland Conference, 2008

3. GM-free island policy

Irish Minister for Environment & Local Government John Gormley (Green Party):

“Ireland is the best place for a GM-free zone in the EU.”

“Ireland fully supports the French proposals for GM-free zones.”

“Many of our citizens are uneasy about GMOs, and about their cultivation especially. It would be unwise for this Council and the Commission, as bodies in a democratic system, not to take account of this.”

“Ireland agrees that the assessment procedure for GMOs, the application of scientific method, and the data and knowledge available to the assessors, must all be as comprehensive as possible. Additionally, all these procedures and the evidence adduced must be transparent and publicly available. The highest standards of risk assessment, transparency and impartial decision-making must be applied.”

“I would also stress the importance of giving bio-geographical conditions appropriate representation in the assessment process.”

“Member States such as Ireland which are committed through their own democratic processes to formalising a status free of GMO cultivation should be facilitated by the rules to be applied at EU level.”

3. GM-free island policy

Northern Ireland Minister for Agriculture & Rural Affairs

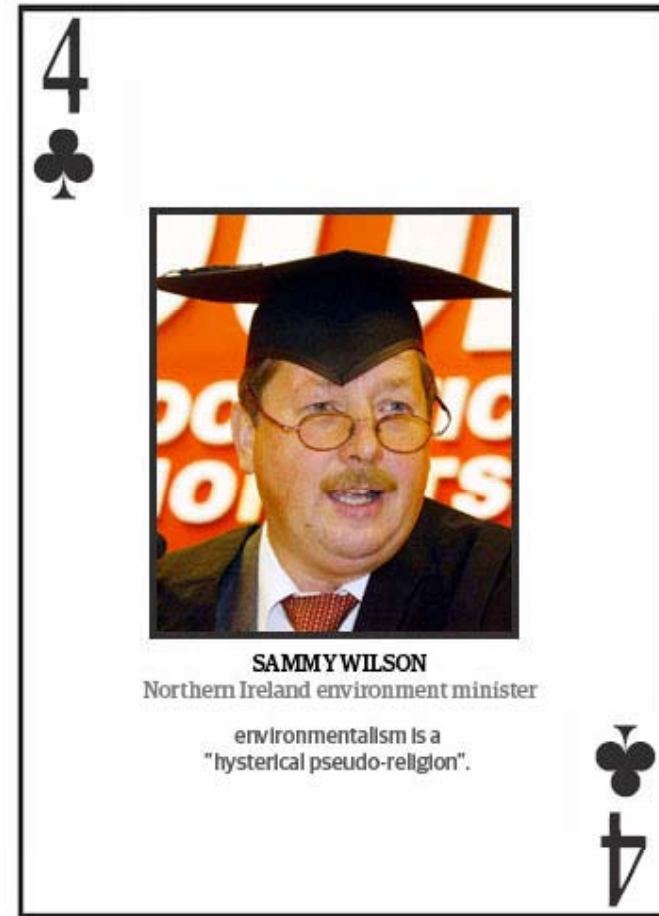
Michelle Gildernew:

“We must protect the diversity of both plants and animals, and avoid damaging natural resources and contributing to climate change... Once we go down the GM route there is no going back: we need to keep Ireland GM-free. And I think that issue - we might not fully recognise it now, but in a very short period of time we could have a unique selling point that nobody else in the world has. And I think as an island economy, we have to protect our status.”

— Slow Food / Terra Madre Ireland Conference, 2008

3. GM-free island policy

But: Northern Ireland Minister for Environment is pro-GM



3. GM-free island policy

2008 - 2009 Irish Government fails to implement policy:

- No GM-free policy agreement with Northern Ireland Assembly.
- Failure to ratify Aarhus Convention (only EU member state).
- Failure to transpose EU Liability Directive.
- Continued public funding for GM research and industry propaganda events.
- National seed bank for living cereals intentionally destroyed in 2008!
- No national ban on GM crops.
- No national ban on MON810 maize.
- No draft legislation on “co-existence”.
- No Government recognition of local GM-free zones.
- No mandatory label for GM food sold in restaurants (as in UK).
- Ireland remains big importer of GM animal feed.
- No mandatory label for GM-fed meat, poultry and dairy produce.
- Continued shortage of certified Non-GM animal feed.

3. GM-free island policy

2009: Government now saying it may follow future Wales regulations to discourage but allow “co-existence” of GM with conventional and organic farming:

- Strict liability on GM crop growers + industry-funded compensation scheme.
- Statutory redress mechanism.
- Local GM-free zones could coincide with local authority areas, depending on the wishes of local people.
- GM crop ban in statutory conservation areas such as national parks and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
- Public national register of planned and actual GM crop plantings.
- Statutory requirement to inform all neighbours and landowners.
- Significant isolation distances and buffer zones w. pollen barriers or traps.
- Producers required to keep records and to train all staff handling GM crops.

3. GM-free island policy

Possible timetable for “co-existence” regulations

Assuming these are based on those of Wales:

- Welsh Assembly draft regulations summer 2009?
- Welsh Assembly final regulations winter 2009?
- Irish regulations by 2010?

Meanwhile:

- Irish Cattle and Sheepfarmers Association (ICSA) calls for GM-free label and certification scheme for meat, poultry and dairy produce.
- Nationwide product recall of illegally labelled GM soy lecithin.
- Growing farmer demand for Non-GM animal feed.
- Organic sector boom - up 11% from 2008.

3. GM-free island policy

Diagnosis:

- Ireland's (Centre Right Fianna Fáil/Green) coalition government has not implemented GM-free policy, almost two years after announcing it.
- GM-free policy agreement with Northern Ireland still blocked by anti-environmental N.I. Environment Minister Sammy Wilson.
- Current Irish government could fall due to national health / banking / economic scandals aftermath of neo-liberal free market "Celtic Tiger".
- Likely alternative (Centre Right Fine Gael/Labour) government could regress to pro-GM policy.
- Legacy of 800 years of colonialism and centralised religion: political corruption + primitive understanding & practice of democracy.
- GM-free Ireland campaign may collapse re. apathy & lack of funding).

Prognosis:

- GM-free Ireland campaign and Government GM-free policy need strong support & encouragement from other EU stakeholders!

4. GM-free biosafety reserve for EU

Image © 2009 TerraMetrics
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Data U.S. Navy

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4. GM-free biosafety reserve for EU

European food security: National GM bans can NOT prevent trans-boundary contamination from wind-borne GM pollen and seed dispersal

The best way to deal with a GM disaster is *before it happens*

Conservation of GM-free agriculture requires *safest location* for seed development & propagation in EU

4. GM-free biosafety reserve for EU

IRELAND IS THE BEST LOCATION FOR MANY FOOD CROPS

- **GMO-free zone (de facto + policy goal)**
- **No GM crop trials since 1998**
- **Lowest previous exposure to GM contamination in EU**
- **Geographical isolation and island status**
- **Best protection from trans-boundary wind-borne GM pollen**
- **Best protection from trans-boundary GM seed dispersal**
- **Estimated lowest risk of climate change impact**
- **Least-polluted topsoil in Europe**
- **World-famous 'clean green food island' image**
- **Best location for development of Non-GM seed supply**

4. GM-free biosafety reserve for EU

**Geographical isolation
and island status**

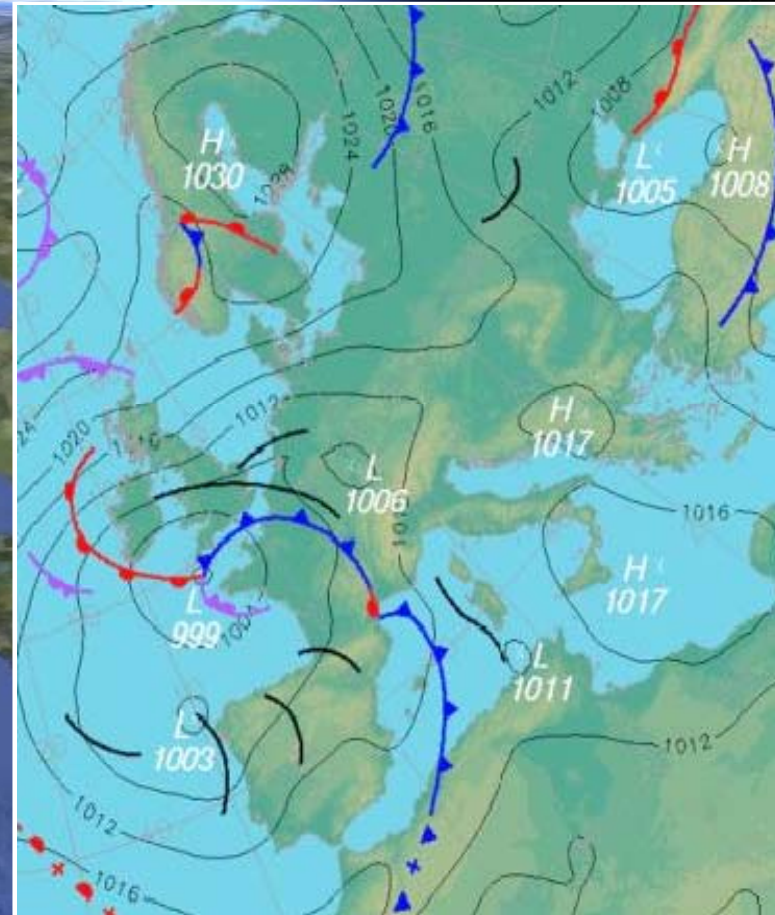
**according to a traditional ballad:
"Thank God we're surrounded by water!"**

4. GM-free biosafety reserve for EU

Geographical isolation
and island status

=

protection from
trans-boundary
wind-borne
GM pollen flow
and seed dispersal



4. GM-free biosafety reserve for EU

**Low risk of
GM contamination
from the UK:**

**entire
Irish Sea
coast of UK
is, or will soon be
officially declared as
GM-free zones**

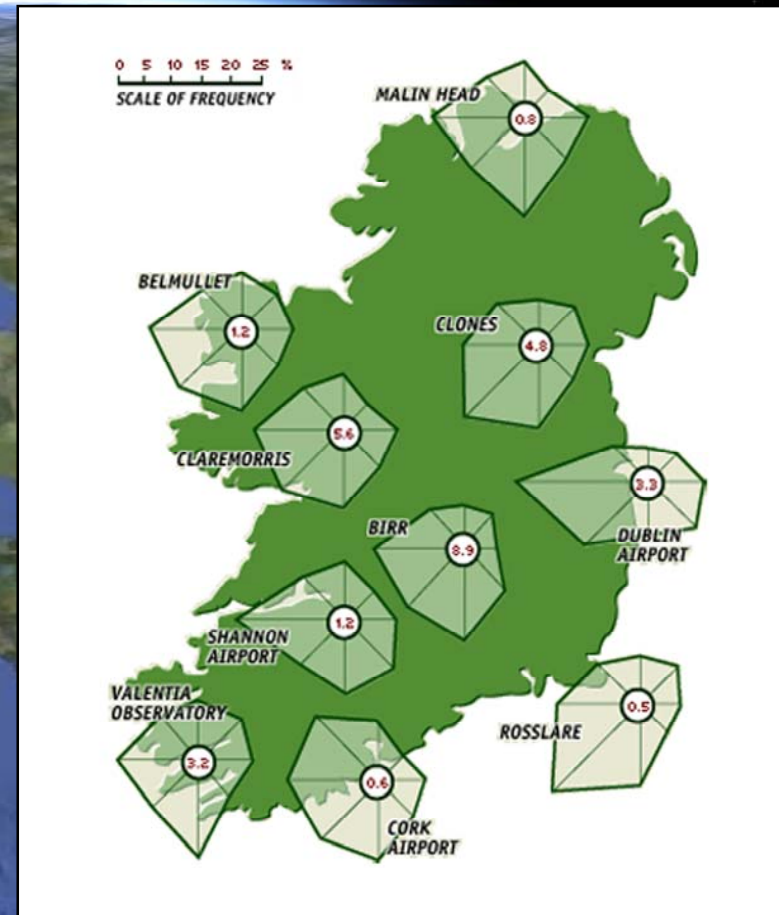
**i.e. UK West coast
English Counties
+ whole of Scotland
+ Wales**



4. GM-free biosafety reserve for EU

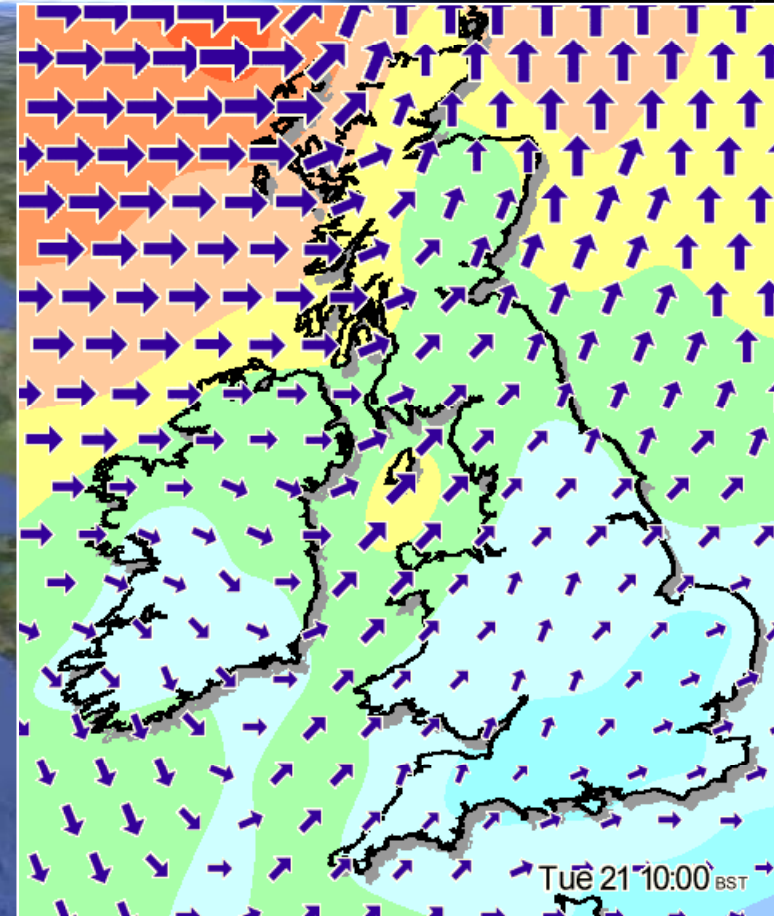
Predominant wind flow
is from Atlantic Ocean

80% of the time
wind direction is from
West and South West



4. GM-free biosafety reserve for EU

Typical wind flow
direction



4. GM-free biosafety reserve for EU

Expected impact of climate change on Ireland:

- least-affected latitude
- + mitigation effect of surrounding sea
- = lowest impact in Europe

“Most fortunate country on Earth - lifeboat for humanity”
— Climate scientist James Lovelock
Irish Times, 16 April 2009

4. GM-free biosafety reserve for EU

Best crop varieties for current Irish climate:

- **Apples**
- **Brassicas:** broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, kohlrabi, mustard and turnip.
- **Grasses:** including forage grasses + grasses for golf courses.
- **Medicinal herbs:** ideal moist temperate climate
- **Peas**
- **Trees & shrubs:** many deciduous and non-deciduous species

NOTE: Potatoes, cereals, maize and some fruits are unsuitable due to recent cooler, wetter summers. But Irish Seeds Savers Association gene bank contains over 600 suitable varieties including 400 kinds of apple and a huge collection of Brassicas.

4. GM-free biosafety reserve for EU

Ideal location for development & propagation of Non-GM agricultural and natural seeds:

- **Lowest risk of GMO pollution**
- **Import control capacity at ports of entry via sea & air**
- **Irish Seed Savers Association heritage seed bank**
- **Economic opportunities for farmers in Ireland and Northern Ireland**
- **New jobs in agricultural research & development**
- **Best base for European Non-GMO seed companies**

... a win-win proposal for Europe !

4. GM-free biosafety reserve for EU

Legal bases for this initiative:

- **Precautionary Principle in EU law**
- **Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety:**

Article 10.6 of the Protocol, which is EU law, recognises that when governments make decisions regarding the import of living modified organisms,

'Lack of scientific certainty due to insufficient relevant scientific information and knowledge regarding the extent of the potential adverse effects of a living modified organism on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in the Party of import, taking also into account risks to human health, shall not prevent that Party from taking a decision, as appropriate, with regard to the import of the living modified organism in question [...], in order to avoid or minimise such potential adverse effects'.

- **Resolution by European Parliament**
- **Policy change by European Commission**

5. Please support this initiative

PROTECT THE ISLAND OF IRELAND AS A GMO-FREE BIOSAFETY RESERVE FOR EUROPE

We invite co-signature of support from:

- Participants at this conference and other NGOs
 - EuroCoop
 - European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
 - European Conference of GMO-Free Regions
 - European farming organisations
 - Foundation on Future Farming - Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft
 - Friends of the Earth Europe
 - GENET - European NGO Network on Genetic Engineering
 - Greenpeace International
 - IUCN - World Conservation Union + WWF International
 - World Commission on the Future of Food and Agriculture
- Academia
- Private sector: food producers, food brands, retailers, and seed developers
- European Parliament
- Governments of Switzerland, EU member states, and EU Regions

5. Please support this initiative

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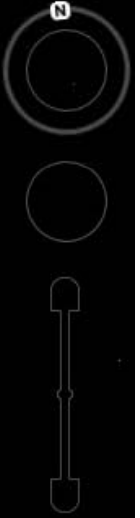


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