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## **GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS – LOCAL CONSULTATION**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Council has been requested to support another local authority in its campaign to ensure that there is local consultation about sites used for genetically modified (GM) crop trials.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council last considered a report on GM crops in January 2000 following a request from Greenpeace for clarification of the Council's policies. Since then, the public debate over GM crops has continued, as have trials of various crops.
- 2.2 The Council previously resolved:
- To require suppliers to take GM foods out of local menus where it had the power to do so.
  - Not to consider a motion to declare the authority free of GM farm-scale trials, as it is not the regulatory authority.
  - To advise Greenpeace that the Council was considering a report on Farmers' Markets which if recommended for acceptance would be a local initiative aimed at marketing local GM-free produce.
  - Not to consider a motion to declare the authority as a GM-free zone as this would be unenforceable.
  - To send a letter to the Minister requesting that field scale trials should cease until the environmental impact of the trials already undertaken had been properly assessed.
  - To inform outside bodies where appropriate of the Council's position on GM foods.
  - That any organisations receiving grant funding from the Council be encouraged to ensure that any foodstuffs they supply are GM free.
- 2.3 West Lindsey District Council (Lincolnshire) is seeking the support of other local authorities for the introduction of a requirement for local consultation and consent to form part of the application process for trial sites. West Lindsey is a predominantly agricultural area and has a higher concentration of GM trial sites (Farm Scale Evaluations) than anywhere else in the country. Their Council has lobbied Ministers for two years about their concerns and in recent correspondence to this Council, their Chief Executive states that "The Environment Minister, Michael Meacher MP, has stated publicly on at least two occasions that if enough Councils objected to the trials, then it would be unlikely that the trials would continue".

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**3 DISCUSSION**

- 3.1 Although there have not yet been any GM crop trials within this District, under the current application process, trials could be planned without any local consultation or approval. Proposed sites are advertised and local people may make representations, but this is not the same as a formal consultation process and there is no element of local consent in the approval of sites.

**4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Genetic modification involves the artificial insertion of a gene from one species into another. Scientists have identified the effects that some genes have on an organism, but side effects may occur, as well as contamination of GM free plants. These effects are not well understood at present.

**5 RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the campaign by West Lindsey District Council for a requirement for local consultation and consent before GM crop trials are approved in an area be supported by this Council.
  - (2) That a letter be sent to the Minister at the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
  - (3) That the support of the local Members of Parliament be sought. (HHHCC)

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**Background Papers:**

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