

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING GUIDE FOR GE ACTIVISTS



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The Center for Food Safety (CFS) is a non-profit public interest and environmental advocacy membership organization working to protect human health and the environment by curbing the use of harmful food production technologies and by promoting organic and other forms of sustainable agriculture. CFS combines multiple tools and strategies in pursuing its goals, including litigation and legal petitions for rulemaking, legal support for various sustainable agriculture and food safety constituencies, as well as public education, grassroots organizing and media outreach.

CFS has a highly effective legal team that challenges the current industrial agriculture policy—promoted by U.S. federal regulatory agencies and national decision-makers—through petitions, lawsuits and other legal means. Additionally, CFS works with a broad array of grassroots constituencies and engages in a wide variety of public education and outreach efforts through a website, distribution of publications, informational workshops and presentations, and frequent correspondence with members and interested consumers.

The Center for Food Safety's True Food Network is a network of nearly 200,000 people across the country who take collective action through our websites and local, grassroots action in their communities on urgent food safety issues like genetic engineering. The True Food Network brings news, issue updates and simple things members can do to make a difference. Join us today!

GENETIC ENGINEERING: GIVING POLLUTION A LIFE OF ITS OWN



The genetic engineering of plants and animals is looming as one of the greatest and most intractable environmental challenges of the 21st Century. Already, this novel technology has invaded our grocery stores and our kitchen pantries by fundamentally altering some of our most important staple food crops.

By being able to take the genetic material from one organism and insert it into the permanent genetic code of another, biotechnologists have engineered numerous novel creations, such as potatoes with bacteria genes, “super” pigs with human growth genes, fish with cattle growth genes, tomatoes with flounder genes, and thousands of other plants, animals and insects. At an alarming rate, these creations are now being patented and released into the environment.

Currently, up to 85 percent of U.S. corn is genetically engineered as are 91 percent of soybeans and 88 percent of cotton (cottonseed oil is often used in food products). According to industry, up to 95% of sugar beets are now GE. It has been estimated that upwards of 70 percent of processed foods on supermarket shelves—from soda to soup, crackers to condiments—contain genetically engineered ingredients.

A number of studies over the past decade have revealed that genetically engineered foods can pose serious risks to humans, domesticated animals, wildlife and the environment. Human health effects can include higher risks of toxicity, allergenicity, antibiotic resistance, immune-suppression and cancer. As for environmental impacts, the use of genetic engineering in agriculture will lead to uncontrolled biological pollution, threatening numerous microbial, plant and animal species with extinction, and the potential contamination of all non-genetically engineered life forms with novel and possibly hazardous genetic material.

Despite these long-term and wide-ranging risks, Congress has yet to pass a single law intended to manage

them responsibly, despite the fact that our regulatory agencies have failed to adequately address the human health or environmental impacts of genetic engineering. On the federal level, eight agencies attempt to regulate biotechnology using 12 different statutes or laws that were written long before genetically engineered food, animals and insects became a reality. The result has been a regulatory tangle, where any regulation even exists, as existing laws are grossly manipulated to manage threats they were never intended to regulate. Among many bizarre examples of these regulatory anomalies is the current attempt by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to regulate genetically engineered fish as “new animal drugs.” Yet, at the same time, the FDA claims it has no jurisdiction over genetically engineered pet fish like the Glofish.

The haphazard and negligent agency regulation of biotechnology has been a disaster for consumers and the environment. Unsuspecting consumers by the tens of millions are being allowed to purchase and consume unlabeled genetically engineered foods, despite a finding by FDA scientists that these foods could pose serious risks. And new genetically engineered crops are being approved by federal agencies despite admissions that they will contaminate native and conventional plants and pose other significant new environmental threats. In short, there has been a complete abdication of any responsible legislative or regulatory oversight of genetically engineered foods. Clearly, now is a critical time to challenge the government’s negligence in managing the human health and environmental threats from biotechnology.

We hope this guide will be helpful in organizing in your own community. Much of this guide was taken from our book, *Your Right to Know: Genetic Engineering and the Secret Changes in Your Food* (Kimbrell, 2007). San Rafael, CA: Earth Aware Editions.

GETTING STARTED: COMMUNITY ORGANIZING TIPS

“If you want to move people, it has to be toward a vision that’s positive for them, that taps important values, that gets them something they desire, and it has to be presented in a compelling way that they feel inspired to follow.” —Martin Luther King, JR.



RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS AND MEMBERS

Recruitment is possibly the most important and overlooked part of organizing. People want to feel involved in something by nature, so you are missing a great opportunity to develop your group, and new leaders within your group, if you overlook recruiting volunteers and members.

People join groups for several reasons, and usually, all you have to do is ask them to join. If you have shared values and vision, a strong campaign, and something they relate to in their community, you are sure to get volunteers. When you talk to people about joining your group, always appeal to why this issue might matter to them. Are they a parent? A teacher? A health care worker? What is it you can find out about them that would make this issue important to them? Recruiting, like so many other aspects of organizing, comes down to relationships. Don’t spend so much time telling them why they should care about your issue, instead, spend that time finding out why it matters to them.

People join groups for a number of reasons, for example:

- if what that group is working on affects their community directly,
- for companionship in a like-minded community,
- for fun
- to develop new skills or find a job in the non-profit community
- their morals, ethics, values and vision

Some tips on how to recruit. Outreach should be built in to every aspect of your campaign. Your group should be doing activities that regularly raise the recognition of the group as well as giving people the opportunity to join. This is easily accomplished at tabling and petitioning events.

Your group can also plan a teach-in on the issue or a larger public event just to get a bigger crowd and see who is interested in joining. You can also do this at related events planned by other groups—many will let you have a table with information at their event. You should ask every person if they want to volunteer. You should have simple things for them to do to get involved. Usually, if one person out of ten that you’ve asked shows up to volunteer, you are doing well.

Recruit to an activity or an event—not another meeting.

You want people involved who are active and want to be active—not chronic meeting-goers. If all the group offers new people is meetings, chances are you will lose them. There is nothing wrong with occasional meetings to bring everyone together and talk about how the campaign is going, but don’t rely on these meetings as the bulk of your activities. Recruit people to run a table on weekends, start a petition drive in their community, speak at their children’s PTA meeting, or make a presentation at their local church.

Delegate responsibilities. Cesar Chavez once said the organizer’s job is to help ordinary people do extraordinary things. No one person in the group should be responsible for recruiting and coordinating volunteers. One idea is to have new members or volunteers run the tables or petitioning activities they themselves were recruited at. They are familiar with the activity and know it can be done. They will know what is expected of them, and will be able to explain this activity well to those they recruit. This in turn develops a sense of involvement and leadership as they recruit new members who go through the same program they have gone through. As you get more and more volunteers, some of the more experienced can run phone trees to keep the other volunteers involved and on track.

Be inspired and inspiring. If you are motivated and inspired by the group and campaign, you will be motivating or inspiring to others.

Listen to people. The best leaders are ones that spend more time listening and asking questions than talking. Good recruiting is based on conversation—not a monologue of how wonderful the work you’re doing is. You need to be able to draw people out. What are their interests, why do they care about this issue, where did they go to school—anything to establish a personal background and rapport. Remember that listening is more than just not talking; listening is active.

Get a commitment and follow it up. Get people to commit to do a certain activity on a specified day—don’t let them walk away thinking, “yes, I should really do that someday,” they won’t. Let them know you will follow-up with them between now and the scheduled time (tell them what day you will call, who will call, etc—be clear on what will happen next). Then call them when you said you would call. Follow up is very important. This lets the new volunteer know the group is organized, does what it says it’s going to do, and that people really do want their involvement. When they show up at whatever event you’ve planned for them, introduce them around to the rest of the group, check in on them, keep them involved in conversations. In short—make them feel welcome and needed in the group.

Develop leaders from volunteers. It’s not enough to just recruit people—you have to keep them. To develop leaders, get to know people’s strengths and weaknesses. What do they enjoy doing? Then think through what the group needs (maybe more people with media skills, event coordinators, writers, etc). Come up with a plan on how to develop new people to the next level (e.g from petitioning to petitioning coordinator, from attending the news conference to learning how to write the news release). Developing leaders takes time and training. Many volunteer groups are short on both. But taking the time to think about how to develop volunteers will save you time later. If the group doesn’t have the time to do training, call around to local groups that might be willing to offer a training. Recruiting and maintaining new members in your group is not only essential, but also fun and exciting to watch your group grow.

ORGANIZING A MEETING

Hosting a meeting of like-minded people could be your first step in your community outreach. Your action will be more effective with even a small group working together. Reach out to friends, neighbors, classmates, anyone who you think would be interested in learning more and getting active. Look for allies at natural food stores, restaurants, local nature centers, farmers’ markets, alternative health centers—anywhere people are concerned about food, health or the environment.

Publicize the meeting. Using flyers, announcements in event calendars and emails. Written announcements should be followed up with phone calls to remind people of the meeting.

Plan the meeting. Have clear goals, an agenda with a time schedule for each agenda item. Have a facilitator to keep the group focused on the agenda and to encourage participation. Have a timekeeper to keep the meeting on schedule. Have a note taker to keep minutes.

Start and stop the meeting on time. If meetings perpetually start late, people will stop showing up on time or at all. Time is precious these days, so start and stop on time.

Have a sign-in sheet. Collect contact information from everyone. Make it available so people can stay in touch.

Break the ice. Plan a fun, relaxing start to the meeting. Begin the meeting with introductions, have everyone say something about themselves or why they are interested in the issue. The facilitator should check with the group on “common understandings” for meeting process. For example, decide if people should raise hands or if they can just jump in to talk.

The agenda: After introductions and common understandings, you’ll get to the “business” of the meeting. “Brainstorming” can be a useful tool: this means exploring ideas from everyone in the group, without allowing any discussion or judgment of whether the ideas are possible or worthwhile. Keep brainstorming to a set time, but allow flexibility if lots of ideas are coming out. Then take time to choose ideas that the group wants to pursue, and prioritize these. There may be sub-groups, some people may want to pursue one

approach while others prefer another. It's also a good idea to have some action people can take at the meeting—for example, write a letter to the store manager of your local supermarket store, your representative or senator, or write a letter to the editor. This makes people feel part of an active community.

Get commitments. By the end of the meeting have an action plan with clear agreement from people who agree to take on certain tasks and a clear time for reporting on progress.

Suggested Goals for a Meeting:

Any one or more of these would be a good start to your organizing:

- Plan a meeting with managers from a local supermarket.
- Plan educational events in the community; link with schools, fairs, other community organizations.
- Organize outreach to local media: set up groups to write letters to the editor and make calls to talk radio stations.
- Plan a Supermarket Tour
- Plan a tabling or petitioning event

Be sure to follow up with all the people who attended your meeting. Call them and thank them for coming, send out reminders for any action people agreed to take, remind people about any upcoming events your group planned and keep them involved. It is also a good idea to call the people you invited who didn't attend. Let them know what happened at the meeting and invite them to the next activity. This will help them begin to feel involved in the group.

PLAN A TABLING OR PETITIONING EVENT

Setting up a table with the group's information is a great way to accomplish campaign goals and engage the public. While tabling you can get petitions signed, letters written and volunteers signed up. Here are some tips to great tabling:

If you don't have an easily transportable table, an ironing board works great. Be sure and have a sign-up sheet for those interested in volunteering or coming to the next meeting or event. A good activity at a table is having people write letters to the company, city council member or decision-maker you're targeting. Have a short

sample letter on hand and paper for people to write their letter. Keeping these letters and mailing them for people ensures that they actually get sent—never assume because someone has taken the time to write a letter at your table that they will actually remember to mail it, this is rarely the case. Once people see how easy it is to “work” a table, they will be more inclined to volunteer a few hours to do one themselves. After all—they wrote a letter!

Petitions are also an easy way to get people interested in your campaign and make their voices heard. A sample petition from a supermarket campaign is included in this section. You want to make it as easy for people as possible. Petitions are also an important tool to use in your campaign because they reflect the opinions of their customers, especially if you collect signatures in front of your target store. These can then be saved until you get the number of signatures you've set out in your campaign goals, or sent as they come in at strategic moments in your campaign. You should set some number goals for how many signatures you want to have before you send them in, and work out how many hours a week your group will need to spend collecting signatures to reach that goal.

Checklist:

If you plan to set up the table in front of a store, ask the manager first for permission. You may be told you can not be on their property, however in many cases there is a public sidewalk or shopping center thoroughfare where you can legally set up your table. If you are unsure, check with your local police department or an attorney to find out what your rights are in that particular space and whether or not you need a permit. If you are asked to leave and are unsure of your rights, you should leave.

Try to have at least 2 people to run the table. This makes it more fun than standing there by yourself. It is also easier to engage people if you have one person standing behind the table and one nearby with a clipboard of petitions and flyers.

Set up your table in a spot where you will not block the flow of customer traffic—be it foot traffic or automobile.

Make sure you have materials: (For flyers, petitions and other printable resources visit: <http://truefoodnow.org> and <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org>)

1. Flyers
2. Petitions, postcards, sample letters— whichever you choose
3. Volunteer sign-up sheets
4. A sign or banner with the name of your group
5. Pens...lots of pens
6. Clipboards to help anyone walking around with petitions have an easier time, as well as keeping anything on the table from blowing away
7. A donation can

Again—follow up is key. Call anyone who signed up to volunteer quickly and get them involved in the next event. As you get more volunteers, you may want to set up a phone-tree to remind everyone to come out as scheduled and include more people in the recruitment process.

PLANNING A MEETING WITH STORE MANAGEMENT, ELECTED OFFICIALS OR POTENTIAL ALLIES

Once you have decided to meet with store management, potential allies, or elected officials, you should plan your meeting. Go into the meeting with a specific request in mind:

- Ask supermarkets to assure you that their store brands are made without GE ingredients.
- Ask them to request policies from their suppliers ensuring they will source only non-GE ingredients for the products they make for the supermarket.
- Ask elected officials to support a specific bill, regulation, or policy. Ask them to put pressure on FDA, USDA, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Ask allies to help spread the word, to display literature, print an article on your campaign in their group newsletter, host a meeting in their community or help plan and attend your group's events.

Each member of your group should have something to say in the meeting. Keep it brief, but give each person a chance to speak. Bring background material: assume

the person you are meeting with knows nothing about the issue. Bring fact sheets and articles that make your main points. Be polite. A meeting is the start of a relationship. The person you meet with may not agree or do what you want. Your follow-up (whether it's organizing a demonstration or another meeting with more people) is just as important and can lead to further communication down the road. If you are asked a question you can't answer, be honest. Offer to get back to the person at a later date. Phone the people you met with a week or so after the meeting, to see if there is any progress on commitments they made. Keep your group informed of any developments, and be ready to act if agreements are not upheld.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING RESOURCES

Organizing Skills and Training:

MidWest Academy

Offers training sessions for community groups and many organizing resources on their website. www.midwestacademy.com

Movement Generation

The Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project facilitates strategic planning for action among leading organizers from urban Bay Area organizations working for economic and racial justice in communities of color. www.movementgeneration.org

Green Corps

National field school for environmental grassroots organizing. Offers a one-year program for recent college graduates. www.greencorps.org

Books:

Organizing for Social Change. MidWest Academy. 2001. Seven Locks Press. Santa Ana, CA 1-800-354-5348 or www.mindspring/~midwestacademy/Book/page3.html

Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals. Saul D. Alinsky. 1971. Vintage Books (Random House). New York

The Activist's Handbook: a Primer for the 1990s and Beyond. Randy Shaw. 1996. University of California Press. Berkeley.

Fundraising:

Books

Fundraising for Social Change, Kim Klein, \$20.00,
Chardon Press, P.O. Box 101, Inverness, CA 94937.

Grantseeker's Guide, James McGrath Morris and Laura
Adler, editors, \$39.95, Moyer Bell, Colonial Hill/RFD 1,
Mt. Kisco, NY 10549.

Grassroots Grants: An Activists' Guide to Proposal Writing,
Andy Robinson, \$25.00,
Chardon Press, P.O. Box 101, Inverness, CA 94937.

The Grassroots Fundraising Book, Joan Flanagan, \$8.95,
The Youth Project
2335 18th St. NW, Washington, DC 20009.

The Whole Nonprofit Catalog, the Grantsmanship Center.
PO Box 17220, Los Angeles, CA 90017. Catalog is free.

Web Sites

The Foundation Center (www.foundationcenter.org)
National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
(www.ncrp.org)

The Environmental Support Center
(www.envsc.org/es01003.htm)

CAMPAIGN PLANNING



CAMPAIGN PLANNING STRATEGY CHART

GOALS	ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS	CONSTITUENTS, ALLIES + OPPONENTS	TARGETS	TACTICS
<p>1. List the long-term goal of your campaign</p> <p>2. State the intermediate goals of your campaign—what constitutes a victory?</p> <p>How will the campaign:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Win concrete improvements? - Give members a sense of their own power? <p>3. What short-term or partial victories can you win as steps toward your long-term goal?</p>	<p>1. List the resources your group brings to the campaign. Include money, staff, number of volunteers, time, facilities, reputation, canvass, etc.</p> <p>What is the budget, including in-kind donations, for your campaign?</p> <p>2. List the specific ways in which you want your organization to be strengthened by the campaign. Fill in realistic number goals for each:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand your leadership group - Increase experience of existing leadership - Build membership base - Expand into new constituencies 	<p>1. Who cares enough about this issue to join or help your group?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whose problem is it? - What do they gain if they win? - What risks are they taking? - What power do they have over the target? - Into what groups are they organized? <p>2. Who are your opponents?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What will your victory cost them? - What will they do/spend to oppose you? - How strong are they? 	<p>1. Primary target A target is always a person. It is never an institution or a government. Your target may be the supermarket CEO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who are you asking to make the change you are demanding? - Who has the power to give you what you want? - What power do you have over them? <p>2. Secondary targets—like a local store manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who has the power over the people with the power to give you what you want? - What power do you have over them? 	<p>For each target, list the tactics that each constituent group can best use to affect them.</p> <p>Tactics must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In context - Flexible and creative - Directed at a specific target - Make sense to the membership - Be backed up by a specific form of power <p>Tactics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media events - Direct actions for information and demands - Public hearings - Strikes - Voter registration and voter education - Lawsuits - Elections - Negotiations

Taken from: *Organizing for Social Change*. Midwest Academy. 2001. Seven Locks Press. Santa Ana, CA
1-800-354-5348 or www.mindspring/~midwestacademy/Book/page3.html

CAMPAIGN PLANNING STRATEGY CHART—FICTIONAL CAMPAIGN

GOALS	ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS	CONSTITUENTS, ALLIES + OPPONENTS	TARGETS	TACTICS
<p>1. Long-term: rid Modern Market's store brands of GE ingredients</p> <p>2. Intermediate: get local store managers to contact and pressure Henry Oaks, CEO of Modern Market</p> <p>3. Short-term: Get 1500 petition signatures to Jessica Smith, local store manager at the King Street store—Modern Market's highest selling store in the state</p>	<p>1. Resources to put in budget: \$500.00</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$250.00 raised from People's Co-op summer newsletter plea - Rest to be raised locally through events, tabling, fall People's Co-op newsletter plea and other donations - Kim and Jane can volunteer 2 days a week, Dave can volunteer 1 night a week, 20 volunteers to call on for events and weekly tabling - 1 computer with internet access, 2 phones, fax machine, printer and copier (low-volume copying only) <p>2. What we want to get out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involve the groups in the King St neighborhood with our campaign - Greater affiliation with a broad-based constituency throughout the state - Recruit 20 new volunteers in key areas of Georgetown, Emeryville, Scottston, Valley View and Ridgeway - Raise more money—\$1000 to cover initial \$500, \$500 more to cover copying and phone for the year - Key store managers aware and worried about our campaign 	<p>Constituents and Allies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anniston PTA - Anniston Food Policy Council - Valley View Unified School District Food Policy Board - Local chapter of the Sierra Alliance - Mothers Against GE food—Sacramento - Ridgeway Unified Church - People's Co-op natural food store - Local 246—union picketing Modern Market for labor contract disputes - Students Against a Biotech Future <p>Opponents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local store managers - Biotech Responsibility Council at the University - CEO - Pro-biotech board members of the Food Policy Councils - Grocery Association of America - State Grocers Guild 	<p>Primary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Henry Oaks, CEO of Modern Market <p>Secondary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Store managers at top grossing locations - Store managers at locations near co-ops, natural food stores - Joseph Pickle—major stockholder in Modern Market - School district food boards—cut contracts with Modern Market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media hits: rallies in front of key store locations, focus on food safety, direct actions, divestment campaign, school district contract cuts, etc. - Set up community meetings with local managers - Give supermarket tours every weekend - Table with factsheets and petitions every weekend at local stores - Petition drivers in front of local stores and food environmental events - Meetings at local food policy boards with key members of our allied Anniston Food Policy Council - Students Against a Biotech Future launch campus campaign to cut all contracts with Modern Market, demand shareholder divestment from University professors - Rally at the shareholders in Valley View—urge local shareholders to divest - Place ad in weeklies signed by Mothers Against GE Food in Sacramento talking about food safety, Modern Market and consumer demands—message and layout to be determined - Articles in key PTA and local group newsletters to alert Modern Market's key customers - Rally at CEO's office at Modern Market HQ in Ridgeway - Direct action with local 146 union chapter at Anniston distribution center—block shipments until CEO agrees to hear our concerns - Direct action at King Street store with Local community and Ridgeway Unified Church—remove GE store brand products until Modern Market will remove them themselves

CAMPAIGN PLANNING STRATEGY CHART

GOALS	ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS	CONSTITUENTS, ALLIES + OPPONENTS	TARGETS	TACTICS

COMMUNITY MEDIA GUIDE



Using the media is a great way to raise awareness of the issue, apply pressure to the target of your campaign as well as build name recognition and strength for your group. Planning strategic moments in your campaign timeline for a media event is always a good idea. When to call the press is largely dependent on your campaign goals, but there are some frequently used media tactics:

- Use the media when you announce your campaign or program. This is news if you plan a good event for them
- You may want to use them at key times such as local elections or regulatory comment periods. Or a time when you can link your campaign to current local news
- To release a report or new information about the campaign or the campaign target
- Call them when you have a big event—such as a large public rally or community meeting

Keep in mind that it seldom works to call the media solely to talk about your campaign. You have to have an event to bring them out. Remember that reporters are concerned about getting a good story that their readers or viewers can relate to, and something that sells the paper. Even print reporters are relying more and more on the visual aspects of an event, so be sure you have something good for them to see—even if they don't run a photo they will often describe the scene in their story. Look at the pictures and read the descriptions of the "scene" in recent local stories to get a better sense of this. Think about what you want the "picture" to look like in advance. What message are you conveying? Is the name of your group in a prominent place? Even if you don't plan on it, you may attract the press by your action against genetic engineering. So be prepared!

Who to contact. It pays to do some research into local media before your event. Keep track of who writes the consumer stories, the environmental stories, progressive business stories. Study what each reporter's or newspaper's writing style is like. When you have an event, call the assignment or news desk and see who the best person is to cover your particular story. After a while, you will learn who is best to contact for which

stories or angles on your campaign.

In this way you will begin to compile a good media list to keep on hand for events. As you gain more experience through working with your local media, you may want to set up a database of your media list to make faxing and emailing easier. You can also put any personal notes in the database that may help you identify this person later.

Working with the media often comes down to relationships. When you find someone who covered your event, follow-up with that person. Don't harass them, but you want to build up a rapport with reporters to keep them interested in your campaign. It is also helpful to occasionally send friendly reporters news clips or press releases on issues related to your campaign – don't overwhelm them, but give them the background they need to write a well-thought story. This may also lead them to call you when the issue comes up again. They will begin to see you as an expert and come to you with questions.

THE PRESS ADVISORY

If you want to invite the press to cover your local event, you will need to let reporters know ahead of time. You need to write a press advisory. This alerts reporters to the basics, the "who, where, and when" of your event. The press advisory should go to reporters a few days before the event. You should fax or email it, then call to make sure reporters received it and to get an idea if they are planning to attend.

Press Advisory Tips:

- The advisory is intended as a notice to the media that your event is upcoming. It is meant to entice the media without giving away the whole story.
- The headline and first lines of the advisory are critical. Busy reporters will only read the headline and maybe the first sentence of the advisory in deciding if they are going to cover the event.
- If you are going to engage in direct action, it may not be appropriate to do a news advisory because the

media will undoubtedly contact your target. This is a judgment call. You may want to focus on a public demonstration or other event to get them interested without giving away specific details.

- News advisories should be short—no more than a half page.
- Advisories should be sent out 1-2 days before the event.
- Never assume the media has seen your advisories after you've faxed them. Call to follow up.
- Press calls should be made the day the advisories are sent out and again the day of the event.
- If a print reporter commits to attending the event, unless you have new information, don't call them again. This is a judgment call as well, but you do not want to ruin relationships with the media by calling too much.

SAMPLE PRESS ADVISORY:

THE PRESS RELEASE

On the day of the event, send the same reporters a press release. This should include the information in your advisory (time, place, etc), but go into more detail and explanation about how the event will proceed and why you are doing it. It should include some explanation of the issue and the background of your event.

Press Release Tips:

- The press release should read like a newspaper article with quotes from your spokespeople.
- Just as with the advisory, the headline and first lines of the release are critical. Busy reporters will only read the headline and maybe the first sentence.
- Keep to no more than one main message with two subordinate messages in the news release. What do you think is the main message of the news release below?
- Have copies of the release along with other relevant materials (e.g. factsheets) with you at the event as part of your press kit to be given to reporters.
- For the media that does not go to the event: after the event fax them the news release and call to pitch the story.

WOMEN, PARENT GROUPS TAKE ACTION AT FOOD RETAILER CALL FOR END OF GMOS IN SUPERMARKET'S PRODUCTS

WHAT: A coalition of women's groups and parent organizations, joined by San Jose Resistance Against GMOs, will demonstrate in front of Safeway, the food retailer. The coalition is calling on the company to end its use of genetically engineered ingredients in its store brand products.

WHEN: Wednesday, May 15th—11:00 AM

WHERE: Safeway—555 Main Street (cross street Jones), San Jose

WHO: Women for Safe Food, Mothers for Labeling, San Jose Parent Club
and San Jose Resistance Against GMOs

EXCELLENT VISUALS

CONTACTS: Jane Smith of San Jose Resistance Against GMOs, (408) 555-1212
Dan Smith of San Jose Parent Club, (408) 555-1311

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE:

(This is from a fictitious event. Feel free to use this as a guide for your own release.)

**WOMEN, PARENT GROUPS TAKE ACTION AT FOOD RETAILER
CALL FOR END OF GMOS IN SAFEWAY'S PRODUCTS**

San Jose, May 15th—A coalition of women's groups and parent organizations, joined by San Jose Resistance Against GMOs, symbolically dumped Safeway's store brand products in a garbage can marked with Biohazard tape. The coalition of groups is calling on the food retailer to end its use of genetically engineered ingredients in its store brand products.

"We don't want to eat genetic experiments," said Sally Smith of the San Jose Parent Club. "We want Safeway to protect our health and environment by removing genetically engineered ingredients from their store brand products."

The coalition also presented the local manager with 1,000 petition signatures collected from San Jose Safeway customers. A letter from the coalition accompanied the petitions. The coalition includes San Jose Parent Club, etc. The San Jose coalition is part of a national coalition of grassroots community groups calling on the retailer to change its practices.

"Safeway tells its customers they provide safe, healthy food," said John Jones of San Jose Community Group. "But there is nothing safe or healthy about genetically engineered food. It's untested, unregulated, risky food. They are doing business the Un-Safeway."

Genetic engineering creates for the first time living pollution, bringing known and unknown risks to the environment and public health. Unlike traditional crop breeding, genetic engineering enables scientists to cross genes from bacteria, viruses and animals into plants. The risks include the creation of new food allergies, superweeds and increased toxic herbicide use. Additionally, the gene-altered corn found in the Safeway product contains an antibiotic resistant marker gene which science and medical organizations, including the British Medical Association, warn could make some common antibiotics useless.

"Safeway customer have clearly spoken," said Smith. "When we were petitioning Safeway customers they were surprised to hear that the company uses genetically engineered ingredients. People just don't want to eat GE foods."

At the same time of today's action, the Los Angeles group, GE-Free LA held a food dump in front of a Los Angeles Von's store, a subsidiary of Safeway.

CONTACTS: Sally Smith, San Jose Parent Club, (408) 555-1212
John Jones, San Jose Community group, (408) 555-1311

INTERVIEWS

If you get reporters to come to your event, they will want to hear your story. You should have a media spokesperson or two from your group chosen before the event. Everyone attending your event should know who these spokespeople are and be able to point them out to the reporters. Everyone should have one or two lines (soundbites) that you go over in advance so everyone knows the message that you want to get across to the press. This is important because the press will likely want to talk to as many people as they can who attend.

Spokespeople should be prepared ahead of time with short, clear answers to common questions. For television or radio in particular, short “soundbites” are likely to be all the reporter can use, so keep each point to 10-15 seconds. Some reporters will let you talk for a long time then just use one 5 second segment, so be careful what you say: be prepared with your arguments and stick to them! For example, if a reporter says, “Isn’t it true that there’s no evidence that GE food has harmed anyone?,” you might say, “GE food hasn’t harmed anyone but we don’t know what the long term threat is.” The next day you might be quoted like this: “Jim Green of CAGE agreed that ‘GE foods haven’t harmed anyone.’ So, a better answer is, “There is no evidence that GE foods are safe in the long run, yet they are not labeled so we can’t avoid eating them.”

Use positive language as much as possible. Don’t just say, “We oppose GE food,” but use a positive approach: “We support the consumer’s right to know what’s in our food and to choose food made without GE ingredients.” If a question comes up that you can’t answer, it’s okay to tell the reporter you don’t know. You can always look into the matter and get back to them. This is always preferable to making something up which could come back to haunt you.

MEDIA FOLLOW-UP

Be sure to collect contact information from any reporters who attend your event or who interview you by phone. You may want to have an assigned role of media sign-in person at your event to ensure that all reporters and camera people who show up are greeted, given a press kit and signed in on a media contact sheet.

The success of media coverage usually comes down to how well your campaign conveys a problem faced by many people in the community, so that people become engaged as participants in the debate on that problem. It has been said many times that “Any press is good press”, so don’t get discouraged by a few bad quotes or low media attendance.

If people are talking about the issue, if it’s being debated in the press, in schools, in supermarkets and elsewhere, your media work is a success!

Checklist for your media event:

- Will you need a microphone, podium or other public address system?
- Have you recruited a good number of volunteers to be at the event?
- Who is sending out the press advisory?
- Who is making follow-up phone calls?
- Do you have good visuals arranged for your event?
- Do you have good soundbytes (short quotes) memorized?
- Does everyone know who the media spokesperson is?
- Do you need a translator?
- Do you have answers ready for questions you expect to get from the press? (Why are you here today? What do you want _____ to do? Isn’t GE food okay by the FDA?, Etc)
- Who is preparing materials for the press kit?
 1. Background information on the issue and your campaign, fact sheet
 2. Information on any speakers and their backgrounds, organizations, etc
 3. Copies of statements made at the event, any report released
 4. A copy of the press release
 5. People to contact with further questions
- Who is sending the press release?
- Who is doing follow-up calls?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

These letters to the editor were written to raise the issue of GE pharmaceutical crop production. Typically, you should begin your letter by referencing the article (with publication date) to which you are writing in

response to—as shown in these two examples below. Check the guidelines for letters to the editor at the paper for the number of words—some require less than 150, some will accept letters up to 500 words.

Sample Letter to the Editor: 435 words

In the article “What's So Scary About Rice?” (Aug. 1, 2011), what’s so scary was not well discussed. The fact is, blood thinner in Rice Crispies or pig vaccine in Cornflakes is exactly the scary stuff we face if we continue to engineer food crops to produce drugs and chemicals. Even the National Academy of Sciences agrees that contamination of our food supply is inevitable and concludes that using food crops to produce substances not intended for food is bad idea. The brief history of genetically engineered foods has already given us ample reason to be concerned about contamination. Anyone remember the StarLink corn contamination in 2000 and the resulting billion dollar cleanup cost? That contamination occurred despite the fact that StarLink was grown on less than 1 percent of corn acres in the U.S. And it is still turning up in corn despite the huge cleanup effort. Just as scary as the inevitability of contamination is its invisibility to consumers—none of us would know, for instance, if we were eating corn that was engineered to produce a spermicide. Spermicide-producing corn looks the same as the corn that goes into tacos, cornflakes, or corn muffins. Ventria’s biopharm rice, which contains several human proteins, is now growing in North Carolina, only about a mile from new rice varieties that are collected to serve as a reservoir for developing improved conventional varieties. Contamination of that reserve could jeopardize the use of these varieties forever. Or, if it goes undetected, Ventria’s genes could end up in new food varieties without anyone knowing. There are also reports that rice breeders grow and test new varieties in NC with the very purpose being to isolate them from other varieties to keep them pure. Undetected contamination of these varieties could result in Ventria’s genes being distributed to many rice growers. Furthermore, contamination will become increasingly difficult to prevent as this technology expands into more and more fields. But USDA has no provisions for evaluating the technology as a whole, and evaluates each pharmaceutical crop application essentially as if it exists in a vacuum. Regulators and the biotech industry have consistently, and often greatly, underestimated the ability of crops to cross with neighbors much farther away than they thought possible. Corn, for instance, is one of the favorites for pharmaceutical crop drug producers, and unlike rice, likes to cross with its sometimes distant neighbors. It seems obvious to those of us working in the food safety arena that pharmaceutical foods crops should not be allowed to take root, and it’s not rocket science to figure out why. It’s just common sense.

**Sample Letter to the Editor:
247 words**

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MEDIA RESOURCES:

Green Media Toolshed

Provides media tools including media training, online press room, image management and media database.
www.greenmediatoolshed.org

Spin Project (The Strategic Press Information Network)

Provides media technical assistance to nonprofit public-interest organizations.
www.spinproject.org

Media Alliance

A nonprofit training center for media workers, community organizations and political activists.
www.media-alliance.org

FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting)

They offer a media guide for activists.
www.fair.org/activism/activismkit.html