

Don't Approve Genetically Engineered Fish

Secretary Tommy G. Thompson
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW, Room 639-G
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson,

As you know, the FDA, which the Department of Health and Human Services oversees, is considering whether or not to allow the commercial growing of genetically engineered fish. I am writing to ask you to oppose the commercialization of such biotech fish.

Genetic engineers are developing fish that can grow six times more quickly than normal, and up to twice as big as normal. The raising and selling of these biological abnormalities could come at a very high price for the environment. Additionally, we do not know the long-term health impacts of eating these altered fish.

Scientists from Purdue University in Indiana say that commercializing genetically engineered fish could lead to the extinction of certain wild fish species. Using advanced computer models, they discovered that if 60 transgenic fish were released into a population of 60,000 wild fish, the species would become extinct in 40 generations. Proponents of mutant fish say they will sterilize their creations to prevent this risk. But no company has stepped forward to guarantee 100 percent sterility.

The FDA recently has come under criticism from influential and nonpartisan groups such as Pew Initiative on Food and Biotechnology and the National Academy of Sciences that question its ability to properly regulate genetically engineered fish. Some experts accuse the FDA of having a pro-biotech bias. I remind you that your first responsibility is to protect the public, not serve the wealthy corporate special interests of the biotech industry.

The public does not support genetically engineered fish. In December, Washington State decided to ban transgenic fish. The nation's fishermen and women are worried that the mutant fish – which are supposed to be grown only in (notoriously leaky) fish pens – will escape into the wild and destroy their livelihoods. At the very least, the public wants labeling. Surveys continually show that 80 to 95 percent of Americans want all genetically engineered foods to be labeled. And genetically engineered fish must be extensively safety tested.

I do not believe the FDA has the necessary expertise to examine the crucial environmental ramifications of genetically mutated fish. Please be sure to bring the EPA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service into the approval process.

Sincerely,

_____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

_____ (address)

_____ (city, state, zip)