

My name is Deirdre Whalen and I am happy to live amid East Richmond's blueberry and cranberry acreages at 13631 Blundell Road. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about the resolution passed in committee concerning a "GE Free Richmond." I fully support the committee's unanimous decision to disallow GE food production in the City of Richmond.

Genetically modified (GM) or GE crops are not good for us in many ways. They affect our health and our environment and they allow corporations to control our food supply. GM crops destroy essential crop diversity, create acres of mono-cultured or genetically identical plants, and ignore local knowledge and culture about the best food production methods and the best plants for each community.

Around the world, GM crops make up only 3% of agricultural land, mostly in the US, Canada, Brazil, Argentina and India. But 97% of the world is GM free. In addition, the majority of Europe's public is opposed to GM foods, and several countries in Europe have actually passed laws banning GM foods.

Don't let Monsanto fool you. They are all about generating profit not about food production. They will create so-called solutions where no problem exists. I would equate them to the pharmaceutical companies that create a market for products that no one asked for.

One such GMO is Round-Up Ready Alfalfa. Farmers do not need it and have been trying to stop it for years. Alfalfa is a perennial crop and is pollinated by bees, so GM contamination is an absolute given. Another example is Round up Ready GM maize (corn) that kills weeds. But the weeds are already ahead of the game and are becoming resistant. So what's next? As a Richmondite, I don't want to help Monsanto create super weeds. This is so much like the super-bugs we have created by overmedicating ourselves with antibiotics. You can't mess with Mother Nature without blow back.

Monsanto and Crop Life will tell you that what they do is natural and they are just taking nature a step further. But take the GM lycopene tomato – it contains a yeast gene - this could not have happened in nature. It makes the tomato ripen later so they can be transported large distances. What they call a "happy accident" helps them market these tomatoes as rich in anti-oxidants. But remember, it's not about us; it's really about profit.

Public policy needs to move in a direction to promote sustainable agriculture and allow for more diversity in crops, not less. Local government is here to serve the public. Corporations that make huge profits should not be telling us what to do. This is about food sovereignty. This is about us, not them.

References:

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