

Minister Vanclief  
Biotech Roundtable  
April 12, 1999

35405 FOLDER ID: 141775

Biotechnology - Issues Management

Minister Vanclief Biotech Roundtable  
Vol. 01 N

Opened: 1999/04/01 Closed: 1999/07/31

35405

**DM MEETING WITH  
BIOTECCanada  
MAY 7, 1999  
BND 016234**

**BRIEFING NOTE**

**BIOTECHNOLOGY**

**ISSUE:**

BIOTECCanada wishes to discuss potential follow-up activities in response to the Minister's Roundtable on Communications and Agricultural Biotechnology.

**BACKGROUND:**

1. BIOTECCanada has proposed in a letter to the Minister (QTE 514920 - attachment 1) that he establish a Task Force to develop a framework for a National Communications Strategy. This initiative has the following three objectives:
  - ◆ to raise awareness of the crisis at hand among all members of industry and government;
  - ◆ to build on the momentum of the recent Minister's Roundtable; and
  - ◆ to develop the much needed cohesive and comprehensive national communications strategy.

**COMMENTS:**

1. AAFC/CFIA are participants in the Canadian Biotechnology Strategy within which communications is a central theme. Thus, while we may work to develop an agricultural biotechnology communications strategy with our clients and stakeholders, we also need to be seen to be a part of the multi-sectoral and inter-departmental communications efforts within the Canadian Biotechnology Strategy.
2. Building on the momentum from the Minister's Roundtable and the expressions of interest in moving forward on biotechnology communications, the BIOTECCanada proposal that the Minister establish a Task Force is worthy of consideration along with a number of other possible options. One such option is that BIOTECCanada itself establish a Task Force of this type. It could be argued that they are well-positioned to develop an industry-led (and sponsored) communications

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effort on biotechnology. Such industry leadership on communications might be seen as allowing government to focus on its key role in ensuring the health and safety of the food supply.

3. If BIOTECCanada were to adopt a leadership role, they would probably look for funding to launch this Task Force. Depending on the specifics of the proposal, it may be possible to use an existing program such as AFT2000.
4. The briefing note (BND 015740 - attachment 2), prepared for Elaine Lawson's meeting with BIOTECCanada scheduled for May 6, provides tombstone data on the organization.

**SPEAKING POINTS:**

1. We are carefully considering your proposal that the Minister establish a Task Force to develop a framework for a National Communications Strategy. At the same time, we are developing and assessing other possible approaches, taking into account input which continues to come in from participants in the Minister's Roundtable. Given the urgency of the situation, we intend to move forward as quickly as possible.
2. As the largest biotechnology organization in Canada, BIOTECCanada's members have a strong interest and the networks required to contribute to the development of an industry communications strategy that will complement that being developed nationally in the context of the Canadian Biotechnology Strategy.
3. It is clear that consumer attitudes will prove crucial in determining the future of agri-food biotechnology. Any focus on consumers which your organization can generate could prove very useful.

**Attachments - 2**

Prepared by: Garry Hewston  
Policy Branch  
759-7322

Networking: Nora Nishakawa (CFIA)  
John Dueck (Research Branch)

may 9.

Meeting with Joyce Groote  
on BioteCanada  
May 7, 1999

BND 016234

BRIEFING NOTE TO THE DEPUTY MINISTER

**Meeting with BioteCanada**  
**May 7, 1999**

**ISSUE:**

Meeting with Ms. Joyce Groote, BioteCanada.

**BACKGROUND:**

Letter from Ms. Groote as a follow-up to the Minister's Roundtable, suggesting possible routes to developing a communication plan.

**DEPARTMENTAL POSITION:**

The meeting with Ms. Groote may not directly involve research issues. However, there are three points to make.

- Agree with the point in the letter from Ms. Groote dated 23 April, 1999 (CTBS 514920) that future new products of research need to be publicized, including descriptions of the technology eg control of white mold in soybean (potentially in canola in the future) which involves transferring a gene from wheat for an enzyme reaction (oxalate oxidase) into soybean. The technology uses a natural process to stop infection by the mold. There are other emerging technologies such as resistance to orange blossom midge in wheat, resistance to Fusarium (a fungus that produces highly toxic substances) in corn and wheat, enhancing naturally occurring nutritional factors in soybean that have the potential to reduce breast cancer, etc.
- Biotechnology is not confined to transgenic organisms. There are numerous tools of biotechnology involved in gene discovery and plant improvement that do not require transfer of genes among species. Once certain genes are identified they may be manipulated into agronomically desirable varieties by conventional genetics.

- Research is a long term enterprise where time from discovery to market is normally 8 to 12 years. Any reduction in research activity in response to the current tempest would have a serious impact on future delivery of technologies that facilitate sustainable production systems (reduced use of pesticides, greater tolerance to stress from drought, temperature, salinity) and improved nutrition.

The need for a coordinated communications plan as suggested by Ms. Groote is obvious and worthy of AAFC support.

John Dueck/CM9905.01  
Research Branch/Eastern Region  
Sir John Carling Building/Room 755  
759-7851/ May 3, 1999





**BIOTECCanada**

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OFFICE OF THE  
MINISTER

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514920

April 23, 1999

Hon. Lyle Van Clief  
Minister of Agriculture  
Sir John Carling Building  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor, 930 Carling Avenue  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0C5

Dear Minister:

I would like to thank you for inviting me to participate in the round table meeting in Ottawa, April 12. I believe that this meeting was timely and helped to highlight the different perspectives and needs of different stakeholder groups within a very diverse industry ranging from producer, to product developer to processor to distributor. Perhaps most importantly it helped to highlight the need for immediate coordinated action to deal with this crisis at hand.

Having worked in the communications area for some time, I am well aware of the need to provide information to consumers that is coordinated, consistent and targeted to well-defined segments of the public. I am also all too aware, through, experience that communications is costly and time-consuming. I am currently re-evaluating what BIOTECCanada's role might be as a coordinator of these activities and hope to meet with key industry members as well as my Board to determine how best to move forward.

I have attached quick notes that I had prepared for the April 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. They are in point form but they do follow the format that you had asked for and I hope that they might be useful to you. I would like to quickly highlight the most important question given the current status of events: the NOW WHAT question.

First of all, we need a plan. I would like to suggest that a Task Force with a short reporting timeframe be established to develop the framework of a National Communications Strategy. If such a Task Force were to report back to you, it would gain high credibility and priority throughout the community. This Task Force could build on the momentum that has been initiated and help to do three things. It would help raise awareness of the crisis at hand to all members of industry and government, would keep the momentum of what has been initiated and develop the much needed cohesive and comprehensive national communications strategy.

I would like to recommend that such a Task Force be comprised of individuals who could help to drive the strategy and who have a good working knowledge of the various organizations and individuals who could deliver on such a strategy. The types of organizations that would be able to implement the final plan would include those such as Ag West Biotech, FBCN, CFIC, etc.

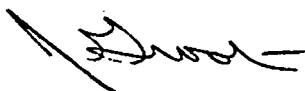
As this Task Force is forging ahead, a parallel activity should also be undertaken that reviews and analyzes the various communications activities undertaken to date in terms of impact, if they reached their intended target, etc.

In conclusion, it is clear that your initiative to bring members of the community together was both important and timely. BIOTECCanada is currently working with other members of the biotechnology community to determine what its activities will be as consumer opinion has the potential to affect the acceptance of all biotechnology products. George Poste from SmithKline Beecham (a pharmaceutical company) perhaps articulated this best. He was quoted in New Scientist (27 February, 1999) as saying:

*The hysteria we've seen can be used as a springboard to go after other aspects of gene research. Press and public opinion influence legislation and legislation influences whether a company invests. The overall climate of tolerance for extremes of the anti-technological movement is taken into account.*

I very much appreciate your active interest and involvement in this issue and hope that my comments are helpful. I look forward to discussing this important issue as we try to move forward on behalf of the Canadian biotechnology industry.

Sincerely



Joyce Groote  
President

c.c. BIOTECCanada Board  
Mr. Byron Beeler  
John Oliver  
Peter McCann  
Dave Dzisiak  
Lorne Hepworthe  
Laurie Curry  
Sally Rutherford  
Dianne Wetherall

## ROUNDTABLE

### KEY POINTS:

1. Canada has a strong and thriving industry that is second only to the U.S.
  - ~300 companies, 72% small companies
  - ~10,000 employees, 60% growth by 2001
  - benefits seen across sectors although health and ag sectors in lead, and across Canada (Ont, Que, B.C.)
  - economic benefit:

health care sector (46%)	- 50% biotech sales
agriculture (22%)	- 23% biotech sales
food processing (7%)	- 21% biotech sales
2. But we are moving into a crisis period where biotechnology is serving as a convenient lightning rod.
  - Greenpeace raised \$57M in '97 alone, and other NGO's becoming more coordinated (and setting agenda)
  - EU is looking at biotech related issues (such as Biosafety Protocol) to deal with trade related issues (EU chafing under WTO/ SPS agreement)
  - Public and media are starting to ask more specific and different questions than before
3. Industry needs to work more closely among itself as well with other stakeholders both nationally and internationally. And all parts of the industry and government need to be involved. This needs to be a priority for everyone - gov't as a regulator, industry as a product developer and user, etc.
  - Communications is expensive!, time-consuming

### EXISTING BIOTECCanada ACTIVITIES:

- Provision of info on what industry is doing in number of areas:
  - # products approved, R&D when available
  - hope to start providing more info (or where it can be found) of types of final products consumers can expect to see (canola in)
- meeting with Editorial Boards, ongoing media interviews, upcoming Press Conference on 20th
- increasing awareness with political representatives and their staff
- Embassy Luncheon Speakers Series

### FUTURE ACTIVITIES:

1. Attempting to work among industry leaders to provide more resources to consistent provision of information
2. BIOTECCanada is re-examining its role and the limits it can reasonably operate within to provide more information. We will need to work with other organizations since, based on experience, is costly, time-consuming, and confusing if messages are not coordinated and consistent.

**NOTE: BIOTECCanada recognizes that industry is not seen as credible but many still come for basic info. and can certainly provide information to those that are seen as more credible.**



## WHAT?

### **BIOTEC**Canada

- 85% of biotechnology industry in Canada as well as research community,
- across sectors (43 healthcare products approved, about 40 crops plants have been approved)
- priorities are regulatory/policy issues, technology transfer, financial issues, communications, market intelligence
- we have recently produced our report "Success from Excellence" which shows Canadian industry is thriving, 2<sup>nd</sup> to U.S.

### *Current Status of biotechnology and food safety in minds of Canadian consumers today?*

1. We are moving into a crisis period where biotechnology is serving as a convenient lightning rod.
  - Greenpeace \$57M for '97 and other NGO's becoming more coordinated (and setting agenda)
  - EU is looking at biotech related issues (such as BSP) to deal with trade related issues (EU chafing under WTO/ SPS agreement)
  - Public and media are starting to ask more specific and different questions than before. Biotechnology also receiving more media profile (more interviews)
2. Communications more than ever requires consolidated effort. Traditionally there has been much pointing to others to take on this responsibility. Lower credibility compared with other individuals is not a reason to not communicate! The communications activities to date have not been sufficiently geared to television, radio, magazines which are primary sources of information for consumers.
3. TRUST: Government, particularly Health Canada, need to overcome present difficulties to regain trust.

## SO WHAT?

### *Definition of issue:*

- Biotechnology is here
- Fear based on lack of information or mis-information. Time to provide info!
- Biotech being used inappropriately as lightning rod

### *Status of issue:*

- various stakeholders are beginning to realize that they are behind the 8-ball and run risk of too many initiatives starting all at once, none of which fit into larger framework or are coordinated
- Biotech could be lost as important technology in Canada (U.S. won't lose it AND WILL GRAB MARKET SHARE)
- Canadians have best level of awareness and acceptance - we need to build on this
- TIME - We have moved from issues to crisis mode. This likely translates into a 2 year window to deal with the communications issue.

### *Stakeholders*

- product developers through to gov't through to consumers/end users - EVERYBODY is affected!

## **NOW WHAT?**

### **1. Position on trade negotiations with EU and US for GM crops?**

- continue to operate under normal WTO parameters. Address legislation requirements in each country (NOTE: not a problem with U.S. but is a problem with E.U.).
- establish bi-lateral relations with EU for variety of issues (already have bi-lateral with U.S.)

### **2. Who is responsible to communicate to Canadian consumer?**

- Gov't - \$, need to provide information on regulatory responsibility, all government departments need to act as one and avoid silo approach, spokespersons need to personalize more (too much distance between spokesperson and listener - need more emotional involvement)
- Industry - \$, providing info about new products available and under development, providing info tools to credible 3<sup>rd</sup> party spokespersons, need to personalize more
- Opinion leaders - to become as informed as possible
- Consumers - to pay attention and learn more factual info.
- Scientists - to provide credibility and higher comfort level of science - easy to understand language is paramount

### **3. What are first steps to providing information?**

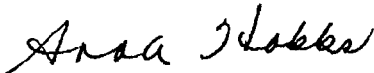
- acquiring resources! Industry (should be included as part of product development costs), Gov't (CBS, Treasury Board Submission for next budget, re-alignment of A base funding are some options)
- collaborative and more formalized efforts both within government and within industry.
- Closer ties to reduce duplication of effort and sharing of information between government and industry
- Summarize and analyze existing efforts and look for ways to enhance efforts and impact
- Information itself - needs to be more consolidated into fewer places - lots available but fragmented and not well targeted
- Start targeting the media as most effective multipliers and conveyers of information
- Expand conversation to all of biotechnology applications which include more accepted health care benefits.
- Develop Task Force with responsibility to report back to Minister Van Clief that will develop cohesive and comprehensive national communications strategy that will also have component that links into international efforts of this nature.

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I will be on vacation until May 3rd. Should you wish to follow-up prior to my return, please contact Bonnie Baker Cowan, vice-president and editorial director at the above address or, at her direct line, 416-218-3546.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to participate in such a worthwhile session. I hope it met your expectations and will be the first step of a successful endeavour.

Sincerely,



Anna Hobbs  
Associate Editor

cc Bonnie Baker Cowan

FOR INFORMATION ONLY!

TEL 07 1353

Quote: 514635

Ms. Anna Hobbs  
Associate Editor  
Canadian Living  
25 Sheppard Avenue West, Suite 100  
North York, Ontario  
M2N 6S7

Dear Ms. Hobbs:

Thank you for your letter of April 13, 1999 regarding public communication and biotechnology. I was pleased that you were able to attend the roundtable meeting of April 12 and appreciate your contribution. I continue to receive follow-up letters from participants and will be considering this feedback to determine the best path forward.

I note your interest in working with stakeholders to provide information for consumers. Your ideas about how to improve consumer understanding of food biotechnology have a good deal of merit and I sincerely welcome the offer of your highly regarded magazine to take part in such initiatives.

As you are aware, it is important that Canada's agri-food system respond to consumer demand for more balanced, accurate, and accessible information about food biotechnology. Working in partnerships can only enhance consumer understanding and awareness of the safety and benefits of biotechnology-derived products. My officials will be contacting you to discuss your ideas further.

Again, thank you for your participation in the roundtable discussions and for sharing your views on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Original Signed by  
**HON LYLE VANCLIEF**  
à signé l'original

Lyle Vandief

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OFFICE OF THE  
MINISTER



Friday, April 23, 1999

515022

Hon. Lyle Van Clief  
Minister of Agriculture  
Sir John Carling Building  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor, 930 Carling Avenue  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0C5

Dear Mr. <sup>Lyle</sup> Minister:

Thank you for the opportunity of participating in the Round Table on Communications and Agriculture Biotechnology. Byron did an excellent job of convening the divergent opinions and positions of those in attendance.

As I suggested at the meeting, the agriculture/scientific community is well aware of the impending demand for food by the world's growing population. The agribusiness community is aware of the rapid adoption of biotechnology in production and processing. From my perspective, the general public's apathy is due to their "not seeing anything in it for them" vs. the special interest groups which have religious, moral or financial interests in opposing GMO. Informed consumers in the developing and developed world are the objective in communicating the benefits of biotechnology -- quite a balancing act!

I believe in a few years the market will evolve to choices between "organic - natural", regular and GMO production and products. With the GPS/GIS systems now being adopted by farmers, variety and location identity verification is not difficult. At the present time, Transfeeders ships location and variety certified forages to Asia in sealed containers, which are coded to production from specific fields and packaged for the ultimate user. Japanese buyers are invited to observe the exact fields "their" forage is grown on. As an aside, we would love to be able to ship a barley-based ration in containers to the same buyers if we could get around the Wheat Board's pricing interference. A second example is the farmer contracting of specific wheat varieties to Warbu on's to meet English consumer demand for a premium high quality bread.

I don't have an answer to the questions you asked but I do know from thirty years in the biotechnology field that there are "too many voices" and

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too little coordination in the message being conveyed to the public about the pros and cons of biotechnology as applied to medicine/foods/environment. The advent of functional Genomics will revolutionize the convergence of nutrients/biologics/biopharmaceuticals towards a "wellness" approach to life.

A summary of my thoughts includes:

- a. A coordinated champion of the cause to speak with credibility
- b. A regulatory system led in a coordinated way by Agriculture and Health Canada
- c. An environment which enhances variety preservation and certification for everyone in the food chain from producers, through processors and retailers to the consumer

Sincerely, with best wishes



R. B. Church

Cc: Byron Beeler



To: Church, Bob  
4039485282

## Biotech Job Bank

All postings are also available at [www.bhrc.ca](http://www.bhrc.ca)  
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For more information call ➔ (613) 235-1402

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1999-04-23

Coming May 7  
from BHRC...

### BIOTECH PULSE

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— Toronto participant

*"Small group, open forum works well. Excellent workshop!"*

— Ottawa participant

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The workshop begins at 8 am with coffee and muffins and concludes by 4 pm. Lunch and course materials – including a biotechnology networking guide – are included. All registrants will receive a confirmation. No penalty for cancellation with at least 5 days written notice before first day of workshop. Participants receive a certificate upon completion.

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Fax: (613) 233-7541

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##### BC Biotechnology Alliance

Vancouver – May 13-14

Registration Fee: \$650 for BCBA members  
\$900 for non-members

#### Contact:

Balraj Bains, BCBA  
Tel. (604) 221-3026  
Fax (604) 221-3027

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515024

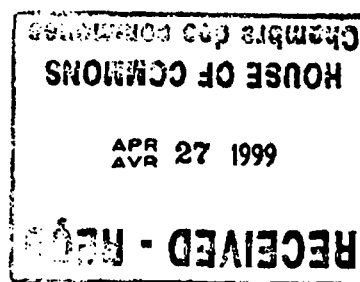


BILL PARKS  
PRESIDENT

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OFFICE OF THE  
MINISTER



April 16, 1999

The Honourable Lyle Vancief  
Minister  
Parliament Buildings  
OTTAWA, Ontario  
K1A 0C5

Dear Lyle:

Thanks for the discussion on Food Biotech and Safety. The meeting of the various voices of food was very beneficial. Eyeball to eyeball, belly to belly contact works.

In my opinion 99.9% of our society believes that all food, whether traditional biotech or today's biotech is healthy and nutritious.

However, we have a few folks who like to stir the pot for no good reason.

Our role in the food industry is to convince the .1% ?? of the safety of our food and reassure the other 99.9% that food is fine.

We have 2 audiences, our own society and foreign societies. Foreign societies include Europe, Asia, South America, Australian, and African.

North America must demonstrate its food biotech safety to its own first and stand firm to convince the rest of the world.

North American food producers guarantee their safety through:

- 1) We consume our biotech food as individuals and as individuals we are not about to harm ourselves.
- 2) We as businesses are not willing to risk our food business by harming our customers.
- 3) Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, your section of our government, are in place to verify Biotech Food Safety.
- 4) Health and Welfare Canada is in place to offer a second major government verification of the wholesome safety of our Biotech Food Supply.

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- 5) NOW ALL of us as individuals, corporations, members of Ag and Food, and Health Canada need to tell our Great News to Society in our Land and Foreign Lands of the Safe and Nutritious Food we offer.
- 6) Finally, 'FOOD IS SAFE, LET'S EAT'.
- 7) We will tell our customers and prospects. Will the rest of the food system do the same, please.

Yours very truly,



Bill Parks  
President

WWP/rm

p.s. - we are willing to help!

# Canadian Living

25 Sheppard Avenue West, Suite 100, North York, Ontario M2N 6S7 Tel: (416) 733-7600 Fax: (416) 733-3398

April 13, 1999

514635

The Honourable Lyle Vancilief, Minister of Agriculture  
The Sir John Carling Building  
930 Carling Avenue, 9th floor  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C5

Dear Mr. Minister:

It was a privilege to be asked to attend yesterday's Biotechnology meeting. Thank you for including me and, in response to Byron Beeler's commitment challenge.....

However many different issues there may be, the one that is most meaningful for me is the consumer's right to know and the stakeholders' challenge to improve consumer understanding.

Based on my experience with the food safety concerns surrounding Alar and the apple industry, communication is most effective when government and industry partner with a credible, independent third party that, in consumers' perception, does not have the vested interest of a stakeholder. Given *Canadian Living's* enviable reputation for reliable food information and our potential to reach over two million readers monthly, I would like to propose that we could create and produce one of the following: a run-of-book supplement similar to what USDA did in an American woman's magazine with over-run possibilities for distribution elsewhere, a special interest publication also encompassing the broader issues of health, healthy eating and food safety or point-of-purchase pamphlets for distribution at supermarket check-out counters nation-wide with postings on our web-site.

As a 'next step', we would welcome the opportunity to meet with a small group of stakeholders to discuss the most effective means of providing information, potential partnerships and the funding of such a project.

cc 61150000



Telemédia Communications Inc.

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I will be on vacation until May 3rd. Should you wish to follow-up prior to my return, please contact Bonnie Baker Cowan, vice-president and editorial director at the above address or, at her direct line, 416-218-3546.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to participate in such a worthwhile session. I hope it met your expectations and will be the first step of a successful endeavour.

Sincerely,



Anna Hobbs  
Associate Editor

cc Bonnie Baker Cowan

Ms Hobbs  
- Back in May 19 AM  
- Spoke w/ Bonnie Baker Cowan

Quote: 515667

Mr. Nick Jennery  
President and CEO  
Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors  
300 Léo-Pariseau, Suite 1100  
P.O. Box 1082  
Place-du-Parc  
Montréal, Quebec  
H2W 2P4

Dear Mr. Jennery:

Thank you for your letter of May 19, 1999 regarding public communication and biotechnology. I appreciate receiving your comments. I continue to receive follow-up letters from participants of the April roundtable meeting and will consider their many comments and suggestions.

I note your interest in working with stakeholders to provide information for consumers. I welcome the contributions that communication partnerships have to offer to encourage open dialogue about biotechnology and I sincerely welcome the offer of your organization to continue to take part in such initiatives.

As you are aware, it is important that Canada's agri-food system respond to consumer demand for more balanced, accurate, and accessible information about food biotechnology. Working in partnerships can only enhance consumer understanding and awareness of the safety and benefits of biotechnology-derived products. The brochure "What the Heck is Biotech" and the Food Biotechnology Communications Network (FBCN) toll-free number are examples of communications projects that will assist consumers.

.../2

Mr. Nick Jennery

Page 2

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With respect to voluntary labelling of foods derived from biotechnology, I am pleased that the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors (CCGD) has indicated an interest in taking a lead on this important issue. I look forward to hearing about the progress the CCGD makes in its dialogue with the FBCN. Officials of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's Office of Biotechnology will contact you to discuss your views on the best path forward for this issue.

Again, thank you for sharing your views on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Lyle Vanclief

**From:** Garry Hewston  
**To:** Biron, Marie, Boddys, Bill, Dyer, Jan, Giraldez...  
**Date:** 6/9/99 1:28pm  
**Subject:** Minister's meeting with BIOTECCanada--June 6th

Grant: You may want to pass this on to others in MISB, especially those in ocntact with the FCPMC

In follow-up to the Minister's Roundtable, BIOTECCanada (Joyce Groote, Margaret Gadsby & Jill Massey) met with the ministers to dicuss industry actions to support biotech communications.

BIOTECCanada indicated that they accept the need for a credible third party to lead this initiative. They indicated that developers are on board as are distributors but they are experiencing problems with processors (FCPMC). Processor responses are varied but may not see it as their problem.

Acknowledged that Gov.t has a role especially in "confidence in regulatory system".

BIOTECCanada is not looking for money at this time but there may be a role for gov't co-funding in the future.

The Minister spoke about championing the biotech file with fellow ministers and that Rock is supportive.

Overall, Minister is comfortable with the follow-up initiative to his Roundtable by BIOTECCanada.

QTE 514920

MAY 12 '99 20:25

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HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

May 12, 1999

Hon. Lyle Vancief, Minister  
Agriculture and Agri Food Canada  
Ottawa, Canada  
K1A 0C5  
Fax 613-996-8652

Dear Honourable Vancief:

I enjoyed being a part of the Roundtable on Communications and Agricultural Biotechnology in April. I apologize for not replying by our 10 day deadline. Here are my thoughts - should they be of any use to you at this point.

Vision - "to improve consumer understanding of Bio Tech"

1. Where are we now?

We have a wide spectrum of understanding and acceptance, including; ignorant and indifferent; ignorant and accepting; misinformed rejection; informed acceptance; informed but skeptical. There is some vocal opposition to genetically altered foods. This group is drawing negative attention to the industry through misinformation and scare tactics. If this is the only message the consumer hears, then it will not be long before there will be mass rejection of bio-tech products despite what may be very positive benefits to the consumer.

2. How do we close the gap between vision and where we are now?

We need to provide information to the consumer in a form that is clear, understandable and accurate. The information must be science based and unbiased. The consumer must view the provider of information as being honest and trustworthy. (ie. Monsanto may not be viewed as totally unbiased and trustworthy with regards to this issue.) We must stress the benefits to the consumer and the population as a whole. (ie. health benefits, cost of food, safety of food, use of nutraceuticals, pharmaceuticals etc.) Communication tools could take the form of press releases, news articles, magazine stories etc. The "We" could be a committee of knowledgeable and interested parties with varied backgrounds but not just bio tech specialists. Government should be a part of this committee.

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3.) How will we know when we have been successful on meeting our vision?

We will know we are successful when consumers accept and do not question the safety of bio tech products, when bio tech issues go on the back burner (likely to be replaced by a new issue).

Again, sorry for being tardy with my comments. I found the meeting very interesting. Bio tech is an important step in our industry but it is not without many fears and skepticism. This is not all negative - as it ensures that we look at the safety issues from all sides so that consumers can have faith in our food and health industries.

It was great seeing you again. Lorne and I hope that all is well with you and your family.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Hamblin".

Chris Hamblin

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April 28, 1999

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Hon. Lyle Van Clief,  
Minister of Agriculture  
Sir John Carling Building  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor, 930 Carling Avenue  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0C5

Dear Minister,

I thought it appropriate to follow up on our discussion on biotechnology that we had at the trade conference. Since then, I have also discussed biotech and agriculture with John Oliver and he shared his input on your biotech meeting with me. His vision and five year time horizon are what is needed.

Across this country we have a number of organizations that have worked hard to bring biotech to where it is today, and will continue their efforts. As John indicated, we need a champion that can convey the information to the public, while at the same time bring the industry together. A possible vehicle for the communication component is the Food Biotechnology Communication Network (FBCN), which if properly funded and supported would provide the balanced information to the public.

As an industry, we need a champion for the agri-food sector, which would bring all components together in a cohesive way. Is this a role for yourself, as Minister, in conjunction with a small advisory group of people committed to Canada's leadership role in agriculture and food? Two people that would be highly beneficial in such a group would be John Oliver and Dr. Bob Church.

Government as a whole cannot champion this, but certainly having the minister take the lead along with key people as advisors could be very effective.

Industry and farm organizations would be supportive of the idea as they all recognize the need for a champion on advanced agricultural technologies, including biotechnology. It is important to the future of Canadian agriculture that this takes place in the near future.

John's points to keep in mind are:

- a need for credibility.
- An Agri-Food Week in the fall that is high profile and designed to bring the industry together.
- Canada's regulatory system is the best in the world, and we need the public to feel very proud about having such a great system in place here in Canada.
- The public needs to be told about biotechnology and its benefits.

If I can be of any assistance in helping formulate a positive image of Canadian agriculture, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Murray McLaughlin  
President & CEO

cc. John Oliver  
Bob Church  
Rene Douville