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## **World's First GM Food Animal Approval Proceeds to Trial**

May 5, 2015 (Halifax/Vancouver) A federal court lawsuit seeking to overturn the approval of the world's first GM food animal will finally proceed to hearing, after enduring a year of delay at the hands of the government. Ecojustice lawyers representing Living Oceans Society and the Ecology Action Centre have now filed evidence in the case against the federal government's approval of genetically modified salmon. This step means the case will finally move forward, after waiting nearly a year for the government to file the documents on which its decisions were based.

The court case was initiated in late 2013 but was delayed because the federal government did not provide its documents until 2015. This evidence included a draft risk assessment conducted by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, which was heavily redacted before being handed over to the court.

"This risk assessment process has been anything but transparent. The government's assessment of this GM organism was done in secret and even now that the matter is before the courts we are struggling to access information about that decision" said Karen Wristen, Executive Director of Living Oceans Society.

Environment Canada approved the development and manufacture of GM salmon by AquaBounty in Prince Edward Island in late 2013. The technology splices the genetic material of Chinook salmon and ocean pout (an eel like marine fish) with Atlantic salmon DNA, in order to create a species of salmon that purportedly grows more rapidly when farmed. Living Oceans Society and the Ecology Action Centre are concerned that this approval happened pre-maturely, without adequate assessment of the risks to wild salmon, and without public and aboriginal consultation.

"Wild Atlantic salmon is an endangered species, which has high ecological, cultural and economic value for Canadians" said the Ecology Action Centre's Mark Butler. "For this reason, we believe that aboriginal leaders and Canadian citizens must be consulted on development of a technology that could have irreversible impacts."

A date for the hearing has not yet been set. If approved for human consumption in Canada and/or the U.S., GM salmon will be the first ever genetically modified animal to be sold for human consumption.

The legal challenge maintains that the approval of the GM salmon is in contravention of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA). The groups contend that in assessing the toxicity of this organism, the government failed to consider all legally required information, and also failed to notify the public of its decision to waive the requirement to consider information about the invasiveness of the organism as required by law. They hope that their court case will help stop the development of this dangerous technology on Canadian soil until all legal requirements under CEPA have been met.

**For more information:**

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Entrevues disponible en Francais.

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