



Unholy Alliance - *Corporate Cristi* at the Vatican

RAFI NOTE: The text below has been downloaded from the website of Inverizon International Inc. at <http://www.inverizon.com/nnews1.htm>. The text is unabridged and unedited.

Beginning of Text:

Alliance for Better Foods supports crop biotech

The Alliance for Better Foods <http://www.betterfoods.org/> is an organization that has been formed by the "Grocery Manufacturers of America" (GMA) to bring together the various sectors of the food industry to encourage the proper use of new technology, to encourage scientific-based discussion, and to disseminate factual information regarding the origin and safety of food ingredients. The organization believes that "biotechnology is a safe way to produce healthier food in greater quantities, ensure a cleaner environment, and aid in the fight against world hunger".

In a separate announcement the Vatican came out in support of transgenic crops....

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Vatican experts voiced a "prudent yes" to genetic engineering of plants and animals, but restated Church objections to human cloning and other biotechnologies that modify the human genetic code.

Members of the Pontifical Academy for Life presented two volumes of documents Oct. 12 on ethics and genetic technology, the result of more than two years of discussion and study.

"We are increasingly encouraged that the advantages of genetic engineering of plants and animals are greater than the risks. The risks should be carefully followed through openness, analysis, and controls, but without a sense of alarm," said Bishop Elio Sgreccia, vice president of the pontifical academy.

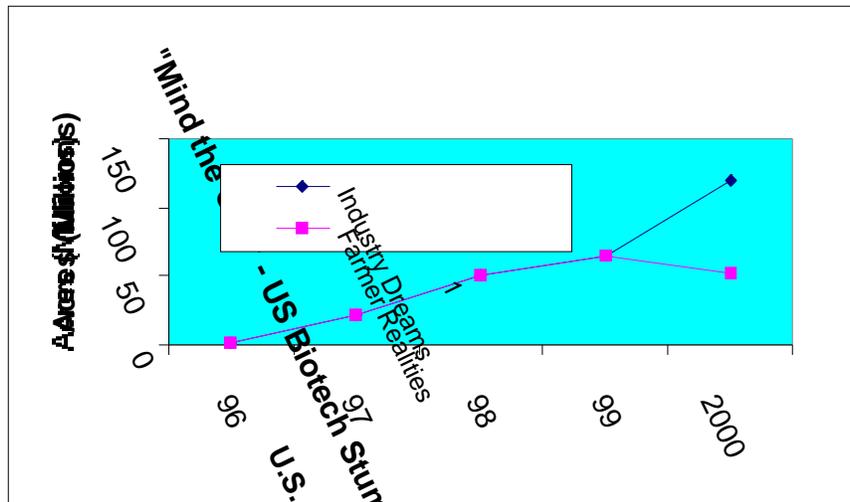
"We give it a prudent 'yes,'" he said. "We cannot agree with the position of some groups that say it is against the will of God to meddle with the genetic make-up of plants and animals."

End of Text

RAFI COMMENT:

The (Holy Roman?) Empire Strikes Back – For the past two years, the Gene Giants and the Food industry have been reeling from one media disaster after another and retreating from mounting consumer and producer opposition. The Alliance for Better Foods is the belated and bothered counter-attack from the U.S. multinationals. In launching their dialogue with the public while simultaneously announcing their determined support for biotechnology and GMOs, the industry is trying to pre-determine the dialogue rather than listen to its critics. By linking their announcement of the “Alliance” with the Vatican’s ill-starred pontification, the companies look more manipulative and self-serving than ever. Never the freshest tomatoes on the shelf, the food industry is setting itself up for failure. This past spring in Europe, food industry reps told the gene giants that they wouldn’t “take a bullet” for GM seeds. Apparently U.S. food companies – and the Vatican – feel otherwise. Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!

The industry had anticipated that the crop acreage sown to GM seeds in the United States would double from about 65 million acres this year to over 120 million acres in Y2K. Biotech companies were projecting seed sales in the U.S. to jump from \$1 billion to \$2



billion. Instead, one report in the *Wall Street Journal* predicts a 20% sales decline – in a market and at a time when momentum means everything.*

Privately, industry spin-doctors concede that the gene giants’ Generation One products (unabashedly tying herbicides to seeds) were tactically stupid and indefensibly self-serving. Many also fear that Generation Two (featuring traits that save processors money) will prove an equally hard sell. The food industry’s pointless defense of Generation One will confirm consumer opposition to Generation Two. The Empire Strikes Out.

Corporate Cristi? The Vatican's faith in the food industry is hardly justified given recent events in Europe and elsewhere. After only four years of commercialized GM crops, it is both impossible to prove risk or to prove safety. Given that Generation One GMOs offer us little more than seeds that can shower in toxic chemicals, it is hard to understand why society should take risks so that the food industry can make profits.

The Vatican has not expressed an opinion as to whether transgenic grapes and transgenic cereals are compatible with the doctrine of transubstantiation (the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ as taught by the Church). One transgression at a time?

NOTES:

The **Alliance for Better Foods** is a U.S.-based industry lobby (whose members have annual sales of more than a trillion dollars) comprised of 26 trade and commodity associations defending 16 GM (or transgenic) crops dominated by just enough food multinationals to make a fist.

The **Vatican** is the postage-stamp-sized temporal state of the Roman Catholic Church, with humungous financial resources and stock investments in the food industry; a half-billion members, and a two-thousand-year history that should make it old enough to know better.

RAFI is a postage-stamp-sized cyber CSO with a half-million dollar budget, six staff members, a 22-year history and is smart-assed enough to tell the Vatican so.

- Kilman, Scott, "Seeds of Doubt – Once Quick Converts Midwest Farmers Lose Faith in Biotech Crops", *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 19, 1999, p. A1 and A8.

