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Governor Urges Food and Drug Administration to Deny Application to Market Genetically Engineered Salmon

September 25, 2010, Anchorage, Alaska – Governor Sean Parnell expressed opposition to the approval of genetically engineered Atlantic salmon for human consumption. The governor said genetically engineered salmon pose significant potential threats to the environment, consumer health, and the wild seafood industry.

In a letter to the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) commissioner, the governor questioned whether the application has received sufficient scientific and public scrutiny, and said he was troubled by the lack of transparency in the review process.

"Like many, we are concerned genetically engineered salmon could jeopardize the health of wild salmon stocks if released into the wild," Governor Parnell said. "Genetically engineered salmon could spread disease, cross-breed with wild salmon, and out-compete them for food and mates."

The governor's letter reminded FDA that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the National Academy of Sciences have recognized these concerns and warned the FDA about the potential dangers associated with escaped genetically engineered fish.

The governor urged the FDA to comply with federal law requiring consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service and production of a report on environmental risks and impacts on wild stocks and called for rigorous scientific research into the long-term effects of consuming genetically engineered seafood prior to approving such products for sale.

"Alaska's salmon industry is critically important to the state's economy, and a primary source of employment, revenue, and food for Alaskans," Governor Parnell said. "Putting a product like this on the shelf only serves to undermine our efforts to educate consumers about the health benefits of salmon consumption. At the very minimum, FDA must ensure genetically engineered salmon are labeled as such, giving consumers a choice."

A copy of Governor Parnell's letter to Commissioner Margaret Hamburg is available at:
http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell_media/documents/9232010_%20CommissionerHamburgSalmon.pdf

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