

# GE FREE VERMONT



TOBY TALBOT / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Protestors put up a sign during a demonstration on Thursday in Montpelier. Opponents of genetically modified crops held a rally on the State House lawn.

## Genetic engineering critics demonstrate for state ban

By LISA RATHGEE

The Associated Press

MONTPELIER — Opponents of genetically engineered foods gathered on the State House lawn Thursday to celebrate what they say was a Town Meeting Day victory in which thousands of Vermonters endorsed their cause.

The activists urged lawmakers to ban the use of genetically engineered crops in the state.

"We're here to ask our Legislature for a GE-free Vermont," Amy Schollenberger, director of Rural Vermont, said to the crowd of roughly 40 farmers and activists.

Thirty-seven towns passed town meeting resolutions demanding the labeling of genetically engineered foods or banning the use of genetically engineered plants and seeds. Already 33 towns had passed similar resolutions, bringing the total to 70, or 29 percent of Vermont.

Sponsors of the rally placed small banners for each town in the snow on Thursday in the shape of Vermont to demonstrate the growing support for the cause.

"One of the most exciting things about this campaign that we've all been involved with bringing resolutions to town meeting is that we are reclaiming democracy at the local level," said Ben Crosscup of the Institute for Social Ecology Biotechnology Project.

And we're here to say that we want an agriculture that is free of genetic engineering and we want

**"If we allow genetically engineered crops to proliferate in our state we lose the unique identity Vermonters have worked so hard to create."**

Jim Moulton,

Windham County Genetic Action Engineering Action Group

that to be all over the state and all over the world."

Genetically engineered foods are typically plants created with other species, such as bacteria. The process is different from crossbreeding in which plants within the same species are bred.

The genetically modified organisms or GMOs may be created to be resistant to insects or disease.

Critics say genetically altered organisms are harmful to the environment, public health and family farms. They want a ban on the use genetically engineered crops, such as corn and canola, until they are proven safe.

Rep. David Zuckerman, P-Burlington, an organic farmer, has introduced four bills in the Legislature that would require the labeling of genetically engineered foods; hold companies that produce the seed liable for the ill effects of the crops; and ban the use of genetically engineered plants and seeds in Vermont altogether.

"When people think Vermont,

they think quality. Today that distinction, our identity as a pure food state, is threatened by biotechnology," said Jim Moulton of the Windham County Genetic Action Engineering Action Group.

"Genetic engineering is not and cannot be associated with pure food production," he said. "If we allow genetically engineered crops to proliferate in our state we lose the unique identity Vermonters have worked so hard to create."

## BAKER LUMBER Inc

QUALITY HARDWOODS AND

V.A. Cutoff Rd., White R

Office (802) 291-9102 • Fax (

Yard hours 8:00 AM - 5:00

8:00 AM - 12:00 No

Weekly Delivery In Y

