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## **Institute Calls on State Attorneys General To Investigate StarLink Corn Disaster**

### **Farmers Vulnerable to Extensive Economic Losses and Legal Liability**

Minneapolis - The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) sent a letter to Attorneys General in seven states calling for immediate action to protect farmers from extensive economic harm in relation to the genetically engineered StarLink corn.

The letter (See Below) charged that farmers are vulnerable to significant financial losses and legal liability because of irresponsible and reckless corporate behavior by StarLink manufacturer Aventis CropScience. Specifically, Aventis violated the terms of its StarLink registration by allowing it to enter the human food supply.

"Aventis did not live up to its obligations, and it has levied a heavy cost on all of those involved in the corn stream," said IATP President Mark Ritchie. "Legal questions are being raised, liability lawsuits are being prepared - we need the Attorneys General to step in and make sure farmers are treated fairly."

StarLink corn was approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for animal feed, but not human consumption because of concerns that it might cause food allergies. Additionally, farmers were required to plant a 660 foot buffer zone around StarLink corn to limit cross pollination with neighboring non-StarLink corn. Numerous reports indicate that many farmers were not informed about the need to segregate StarLink, or about the required 660 foot buffer zone.

IATP is part of the coalition, Genetically Engineered Food Alert, which commissioned the initial testing that discovered StarLink in Taco Bell, Safeway, and Western Family taco shells. StarLink has been mixed together with non-StarLink corn on a mass scale and has contaminated much of the 2000 corn crop. In Iowa, conservative estimates are that 50 percent of the corn has been contaminated with StarLink. The Food and Drug Administration has issued a recall alert for nearly 300 products (see [www.safetyalerts.com/recall/f/00/023261](http://www.safetyalerts.com/recall/f/00/023261)) because of StarLink contamination.

Costs related to the recall of StarLink will likely escalate into the hundreds of millions of dollars as it affects farmers, grain elevators, food processors, food companies and

retailers. Aventis is quietly negotiating on an individual basis with farmers to buy back the StarLink corn. The company has not made clear the precise terms of the buy-back plan, or set uniform terms for all farmers and elevators. At the same time, Aventis is attempting to limit the company's liability by getting the EPA to reverse its previous ruling and allow StarLink into the food stream.

The letter to state Attorneys General lays much of the blame for the StarLink disaster on the USDA and EPA which should have known that: 1) there is no current system to segregate animal feed corn from corn eaten by humans; 2) there is no system to educate or monitor farmers on proper growing and handling practices; 3) there was no testing to identify where contamination was taking place.

"We've had to reach out to State Attorneys General because the USDA is clearly more interested in protecting Aventis than farmers," said Ritchie. "The USDA has taken the unprecedented move of participating in a corn recall to aid a private company. The USDA has

allowed Aventis to keep the terms of the buy-back murky, weakening the position of farmers. They have sought to limit Aventis' liability by calling on EPA to allow existing StarLink in food. And they are encouraging the export of StarLink to other countries around the world."

Attorneys General from the seven states with the most StarLink corn were sent letters which detailed a series of still unresolved issues. Those states include Iowa (134,910 acres), Nebraska (41,529 acres), Minnesota (35,091 acres), South Dakota (34,290 acres), Kansas (21,390 acres), Missouri (18,702 acres), and Illinois (17,466 acres).

The full letter to the state of Minnesota Attorney General can be read below. Letters to the other states are comparable. Contact IATP for copies of letters to the other states.

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