

# USA: GENETICALLY-MODIFIED FUJI APPLE COULD BE ON TABLES SOON

in

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SUMMARY: "A British Columbia company has petitioned the USDA to deregulate sales of the Arctic Fuji, which is genetically modified to resist browning after slicing."

A Fuji apple that resists turning brown could be on U.S. tables sometime this year, despite concerns over the genetically-engineered fruit by consumer and trade groups.

Okanagan Specialty Fruits (OSF) of Summerland, B.C., has petitioned the U.S. Department of Agriculture to deregulate sales of its Arctic Fuji, which is genetically modified to reduce browning after slicing. Summerland is in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley, about 50 miles north of the Canadian border near Oroville.

Two other of the company's non-browning varieties — the Arctic Golden and Arctic Granny — were approved last year by the USDA for commercial sale. Submitted Dec. 31, the new petition contains substantial data on non-browning apples that demonstrates the safety and healthfulness of the Arctic Fuji, said a company press release.

To inhibit browning, the company uses "gene silencing" to reduce the apple cells' supply of the plant enzyme polyphenol oxidase (PPO), which contributes to turning apple flesh brown.

"Arctic Apples produce practically no PPO so that enzymatic browning reaction never occurs," said the press release. "No chemical reaction; no yucky brown apple left behind."

The nonprofit Center for Food Safety, based in Washington, D.C., argued last year that OSF's genetically-engineered varieties could pose risks for Canadian and U.S. growers concerned about contamination of non-GMO and organic orchards by the non-browning apples.

The Center also argued that browning is a sign that apples are no longer fresh, and that masking this natural signal could lead to people to consume older, overripe and expired fruit.

OSF argues on its website that their Arctic brand biotech apples may be the most studied and researched apple on the market after a decade of field trials and years of review by U.S. and Canadian regulatory agencies.

SOURCE: The Seattle Times

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URL: <http://www.seattletimes.com/business/agriculture/genetically-modified-fu...> [2]

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[2] <http://www.seattletimes.com/business/agriculture/genetically-modified-fuji-apple-could-be-on-tables-soon/>