

## U.S. Gulf Coast Faces New Disaster: GMO Trees

On May 12th, the USDA approved a request by ArborGen, a GMO trees company, to plant 260,000 cold-tolerant genetically engineered eucalyptus trees in seven states along the U.S. Gulf Coast: Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina. ArborGen next plans to commercially release GE eucalyptus for planting on millions of acres in these states. They already have a request pending with the USDA to do this.

Eucalyptus plantations are notoriously destructive—causing deadly wildfires, depleting fresh water, and escaping into native forests where they displace biodiversity and wildlife. If commercially released, GE eucalyptus plantations would threaten to replace precious native hardwood forests in the South due to the increased financial incentive to replace slow-growing native forest stands with monoculture plantations of GE eucalyptus that mature in as few as 3-5 years.

The danger of GE cold-tolerant eucalyptus is not limited to the U.S., however. If perfected here, ArborGen intends to export GE eucalyptus around the world. The cold tolerance trait will greatly expand the range where eucalyptus plantations can be developed and spread the disaster of eucalyptus plantations to new ecosystems and communities.

GE Eucalyptus trees are just the beginning. If GE eucalyptus are approved, engineered versions of native trees like poplar and pine will surely follow—which will inevitably and irreversibly contaminate native forests.

For more information on this issue, go to <http://www.nogetrees.org>