

## Ag Department records raise concerns of illegal experimentation with GM crops

An inspection of an orchard of experimental, genetically modified apples in central Washington last year turned up a troubling finding – gene-altered trees flowering less than 100 feet from conventional apple trees.

The grower, Gebbers Farms of Brewster, Washington, previously had been cited for conducting a field trial to near conventional apples, failing to keep good records and making no effort to keep animals away from the plot. So last November, the federal Animal Plant Health Inspection Service did what it seldom does – slapped Gebbers with a civil penalty of \$19,250 for failing to comply with rules governing field trials of genetically modified crops.

Until now, the location of the experimental apple plot in Washington – which Gebbers says was abandoned this year – had not been publicly known. Details of Gebbers' field trials and hundreds of inspections of field trials with genetically modified plants were obtained by Hearst under Freedom of Information laws.

The inspection reports and other agriculture department records present a picture of the vast outdoor experimentation with genetically modified crops, which is expanding swiftly from common field crops like corn and soybeans into the realm of whole foods and plants with industrial uses.

The documents show how the obscure Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), part of the government agency charged with promoting and protecting agriculture, takes an industry-friendly approach to regulating as it seeks to prevent contamination or economic harm from field trials.

**Read the full, original article:** [Gene-altered apple tested in Washington state](#)