

Judge may reject FDA AquaBounty GMO salmon approval, citing risk to 'local ecology'

At a hearing [August 25], U.S. District Judge Vincent Chhabria said he's concerned that AquaBounty, the biotech company behind the GMO salmon, might use the FDA's finding of "no significant impact" to expand the program without realizing its full impact on local ecology.

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AquaBounty's salmon, touted for its abnormally high growth rate, marks the first time the FDA has allowed a genetically modified animal to be raised and sold for food.

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The FDA approved the company's application to make and sell the genetically engineered salmon in 2015, spurring a lawsuit from the anti-GMO group Center for Food Safety and several environmental organizations and trade groups representing the fishing industry.

Chhabria said he wasn't so sure that the FDA's environmental assessment won't set a precedent for approving future AquaBounty facilities.

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Environmental groups claim the FDA's latest environment assessment from 2015 is already outdated and doesn't adequately ensure the safety of wild Atlantic salmon that could be harmed by competition for food and interbreeding by their much larger genetically engineered brethren. They asked Chhabria to vacate it and order a more comprehensive environmental impact statement.

[Editor's note: To learn more, read: [Viewpoint: Fast-growing GMO salmon poised to hit US stores in 2020, but why did it take 30 years?](#)]

Chhabria said he was inclined to reject the assessment and order the FDA to take a closer look at the project's potential hazards, but did not issue a formal ruling [August 25].

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