Veille citoyenne d'information sur les OGM et les semences

Illegal GMO flax in Jacquet brand wraps

Par Christophe NOISETTE

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In April 2026, Jacquet, a subsidiary of Limagrain, withdrew wraps from the French market: they contained genetically modified flax not commercially authorized. While no genetically modified flax varieties are currently officially cultivated worldwide, Canada authorized the cultivation of one variety in 1996 before withdrawing the authorization in 2001. This country has also recently ended its mandatory flax export monitoring program.



L'emballage des 6 Wraps Protéinés de Jacquet rappelés

GMOs are regulated by European and French legislation. Therefore, to be marketed, a GMO must have been authorized, and to obtain authorization, it must have undergone a health assessment. A method for detecting and identifying it in seeds, food products, or other materials must also have been validated. This last point is fundamental: without such a validated and standardized method, professionals and authorities cannot verify labeling compliance throughout the supply chain, nor monitor contamination, whether in food products (as in this case), seeds, or fields. Yet, illegal GMOs regularly arrive in our ports and on our plates.

Recall of illegal wraps

On April 16, 2026, the French consumer recall website *Rappel Conso* listed a product from the Jacquet brand, a subsidiary of Limagrain[1]. This product, "*plain protein wraps*", contained unauthorized genetically modified flax. *Rappel Conso*, created and implemented by the French

government in April 2021, lists recalls of products intended for human and animal consumption, as well as non-food products, identified as posing a health or safety risk or being sold illegally. The presence of unauthorized or unlabeled GMOs are also reasons justifying a recall.

According to Jacquet's consumer service, contacted by Inf'OGM, the recall was due to the presence of genetically modified flax "*FP967/CDC Triffid*" in the flour used, detected following tests conducted by the company itself. The company clarified: "*The level of contamination is extremely low (trace amounts, barely above the LOD detection threshold of 0.01%), and based on the information currently available, we tend to conclude that this was an accidental contamination. Enhanced monitoring has been implemented*".

The European Union's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF)[2], the European equivalent of French consumer recalls, indicates that the contamination originated in the Netherlands, one of the main entry points for numerous food products into the EU. Jacquet explained that "*the product is indeed manufactured in the Netherlands, but the analysis was carried out in France*".

Luxembourg also reported the presence of this flax in the same product, but did not indicate that it had "*withdrawn*" the product, unlike the measures taken in France[3]. It simply advised consumers to return the product to the store where they purchased it.

A GMO flax with a mysterious origin

Where does this genetically modified flax come from? Probably North America. While the United States authorized a herbicide-tolerant genetically modified flax, CDC Triffid FP967, developed by the University of Saskatchewan[4], in 1999, there is no record of its commercial cultivation[5]. Canada, for its part, authorized the cultivation of this flax in 1996. Tested in fields in the 1990s in three states (Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta), it has never been cultivated on large areas.

While some articles claim it has never been commercially cultivated[6], RCAB[7], a Canadian NGO, writes that in 2001, "*about 40 seed producers were multiplying approximately 4,500 tonnes of seeds[8] for future use, but all of this was wiped out when flax was withdrawn from the market that year*". Indeed, this authorization was revoked in 2001 at the request of the Flax Council of Canada and the Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission, to avoid "*losing*"[9] the European market. Although Canada exports more than 60% of its flax production to the EU, the latter has never authorized the import of this genetically modified flax.

Despite a strict and costly protocol, GM flax is still growing

While in 2001, Canadian authorities emphasized that all the flax seeds produced had been destroyed (4,500 tons of seeds, theoretically enough to sow between 75,000 and 150,000 hectares, depending on the seeding rate), contamination by genetically modified flax was subsequently detected in Europe.

In 2009, the presence of this flax, genetically modified to tolerate herbicides, was reported in 34 countries, according to the association France Nature Environnement[10]. This presence resulted in a significant drop in flax exports to Europe, which led the flax industry to finance large-scale testing on farms and in ports. According to a report by the NGO RCAB[11], "*in 2010, the Canadian government committed $1.9 million [€1.3 million] to develop methods for testing flax seeds for GMO contamination. In 2011, the subsidies enabled approved laboratories to offer farmers a 50% discount on the cost of these types of tests*". Every shipment was scrutinized. The industry also undertook significant work to rebuild stocks of GMO-free flax seeds. According to Marie-Hélène

Bacon[12], "*in order to start from scratch, farmers were advised to dispose of any seeds they had saved from previous harvests, even if they no longer cultivated flax. In 2010, flax plants initially grown in greenhouses were sent to New Zealand, a country that had never cultivated flax in a hundred years, to multiply the seeds until 2012 in order to rebuild a healthy base of certified seeds* ". Other drastic measures had been recommended by the Flax Council, such as not planting flax in a field that had been cultivated there in the previous five years.

According to the same RCAB's report, citing the Saskatchewan Flax Council[13], the estimated cost of this incident was $29.1 million (€20.7 million) for the Canadian industry. Another consequence was the loss of autonomy for farmers. Indeed, farmers were strongly encouraged to purchase certified seeds, whereas "*before 2009, approximately 75% of farmers who [grown] flax in Canada used their own on-farm saved seeds*"[14]. All of these measures significantly reduced the presence of GM flax, but did not eliminate it entirely, as evidenced by the presence of Triffid flax in 2026 in Jacquet company wraps.

Furthermore, in 2024, the presence of GM flax in animal feed was recorded in the RASFF register [15]: originating from Russia and Ukraine, this GM flax was found in several European countries[16]. The RASFF entry mentions, once again, that this is a self-regulation by a company, without specifying which one. It is important to note that Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan are world leaders in oilseed flax production and export their output on a massive scale[17]. Russia and Ukraine have also cultivated GMOs illegally (soybeans, corn and rapeseed)[18].

End of monitoring of GMO flax by Canadian authorities

The irony is that Canada has just officially declared the end of the sampling and analysis protocol in place since 2009 for Canadian flaxseed exported to the European Union. This protocol was adopted to address the contamination of Canadian production by genetically modified flax not authorized in Europe. The announcement was made on April 24, 2026[19], one week after the public announcement of the market withdrawal of Jacquet wraps due to contamination by genetically modified flax, and the decision took effect on May 1. The Canadian government welcomes the work undertaken and explains on its website that "*the removal of this non-tariff barrier demonstrates the safety, reliability, and quality of Canadian agricultural and agri-food exports*". It adds that this decision "*demonstrates the strength of the Canada-EU strategic partnership and our shared commitment to resolving persistent trade disputes through cooperation and dialogue*".

The issue is primarily economic. The government notes that this protocol would put Canadian exporters at a disadvantage compared to their competitors and welcomes the fact that the end of these monitoring programs "*offers increased economic potential for Canadian flaxseed farmers and exporters*". When questioned by *Inf'OGM* about this surprising decision, given that Triffid flax has once again been found in Europe, the Canadian government responded: "*The RASFF notification […] initially indicated Belgium, France, and the Netherlands as potentially involved. It appears that Kazakhstan and Canada were added later. This notification is part of an ongoing investigation. Therefore, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada cannot provide further comment on this specific event*"[20].

This response intrigues us because, when questioned by Inf'OGM, the European Commission stated that "*the investigation into the origin of the flax seeds in the April 2026 notification is still ongoing*". *Inf'OGM* also asked the Jacquet company about the origin of this GM flax, and they replied that they did not know. Canada thus seems to be somewhat hastily absolving itself of any responsibility for this illegal presence of genetically modified flax in Europe…

A long history of contamination in our imports

This story is reminiscent of the presence of illegal GM rice, papaya, soy, and corn in European imports for decades. *Inf'OGM* has extensively documented these cases of contamination. In 2006, the first case of GM rice was detected, and in 2024, 14 cases of illegal GM rice were still being reported to the RASFF.

In 2026, European alerts concern, in addition to flax in these wraps, several cases of GMO soy from Argentina or Brazil in animal feed, GMO corn in polenta in Italy, and GMO rice in rice pasta from China21.

Currently, customs and other food compliance control services have the ability to conduct inspections at points of import or in the European market because, as we wrote previously, they have approved and validated methods for detecting transgenic GMOs. European legislation requires any company applying for commercial authorization for a GMO in Europe to provide the analytical method for detecting and identifying it. In the proposal currently under discussion to deregulate GMOs produced using new genetic modification techniques (NGTs), this method would no longer be required for a very large number of them. By the summer, if the European Parliament votes for this text, already adopted by the Council of the EU on April 21, 2026, consumers will no longer be able to know what they consume nor will processors know what they work with22.

- + République française, Rappel Conso, « WRAPS PROTEINES NATURE », 16 April 2026.
- + European Commission, RASFF, « Notification 2026.3317 – Detection of an unauthorized GMO (flax) in protein wraps », 17 April 2026.
- + Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, Portail de la sécurité alimentaire, « Rappel : 6 Wraps Protéinés de la marque Jacquet – Présence possible d'organismes génétiquement modifiés non autorisés », 17 April 2026.
- + USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), « University of Saskatchewan: Availability of determination of nonregulated status for flax genetically engineered for tolerance to soil residues of sulfonylurea herbicides », Federal Register, vol. 64, n° 102, 27 May 1999.
- + In the APHIS database, a field trial of transgenic flax carried out by BASF is recorded as having taken place between July 2002 and July 2003, with no further details provided.
- + In the article by Vanella *et al.*, which focuses on the detection of FP967 flax and was published in *Food Control* in 2014, it states : « *After safety assessment by the Canadian Government, the CDC Triffid (FP967) line was authorized for food (1996) and feed (1998) use in Canada and United States, but was never released for commercial production according to communications of the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) (U.S. Dep. of Agriculture, 1998)* ».
  Rosario Vanella, Anna Weston, Peter Brodmann, Eric Kübler, « Development of an event-specific assay for the qualitative and quantitative detection of the genetically modified flax CDC Triffid (FP967) », *Food Control*, Volume 41, Pages 128-133, 2014.
- + CBAN, « Flax ».
- + 200 000 bushels precisely.
- + CBAN, « Flax ».
- + FNE, « Le lin OGM canadien se répand dans le monde », 26 October 2009.
- + CBAN, « Are GM crops better for farmers? », 2015.
- + Marie-Hélène Bacon, « LES CHAMPS D'ESSAIS EXPÉRIMENTAUX DE PLANTES TRANSGÉNIQUES À VISÉE PHARMACEUTIQUE AU CANADA ET AUX ÉTATS-UNIS ET LA MISE HORS CHAMPS DES ENJEUX D'ENCADREMENT PUBLIC, D'ENVIRONNEMENT ET DE SANTÉ », Université du Québec à Montréal, May 2014.
- + Thompson, S., Groenewegen, J., Hodgins, M., Spearin, D., Yungblut, D., « Investigating Value Added Potential of Flaxseed and Straw. Final Report of the Project for SaskFlax », 23 février 2015 (document currently unavailable online).
- + CBAN, « Are GM crops better for farmers? », 2015.
- + European Commission, RASFF, « Notification 2024.8925 – Not authorized GMO in linseed », 3 December 2024.
- + Germany, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Spain, France, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Sweden.

- + Made in Russia, « La Russie est devenue un leader dans l'exportation de lin oléagineux », 15 May 2020.
- + Charlotte Krinke, « OGM : Ukraine – Culture illégale de soja transgénique », *Inf'OGM*, 11 December 2018.
  Anne Furet, « RUSSIE – A l'instar du Brésil, la politique du fait accompli ? », *Inf'OGM*, 31 October 2009.
- + Government of Canada, « Removal of non-tariff trade barrier for flaxseed to the EU reflects confidence in Canada's agricultural exports », 24 April 2026.
- + We received this reply after the article had been published, so we have amended it accordingly. The reply we initially received stated : « *The RASFF notification indicates that Belgium, France, and the Netherlands are the countries of origin of the flax seeds where the GMO was detected (and not Canada). Furthermore, the flaxseed protocol, which expired on May 1, 2026, was still in force when the EU carried out the detection. The Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is therefore confident that these flax seeds did not originate in Canada* ».
- + For Italy :
  European Commission, RASFF, « Notification 2026.0021 – Ogm in polenta al di sopra dei limiti //GMOs in polenta above the limits », 5 January 2026.
  For China :
  European Commission, RASFF, « Notification 2026.2061 – Rice Noodles China cryIAb/Ac », 12 mars 2026.
- + Eric Meunier, « EU Council approves deregulation of GMOs/NGTs », *Inf'OGM*, 21 April 2026.

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