

New genetics protested

Spraying to protect strawberries feared

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Professor Thomas Jukes, right, of the University of California, gives a thumbs down to a protest Wednesday against the use of genetic engineering to protect strawberries from frost.

SALINAS, Calif. (AP) Protesters demonstrated Wednesday outside the headquarters of a genetic research company, charging that a man-made bacteria designed to prevent frost damage on strawberries has not been adequately tested.

Meanwhile, the environmental Foundation on Economic Trends said in Washington that it would ask federal judge Thursday to issue preliminary injunction against the first release of genetically altered micro-organisms into the atmosphere.

"We think there is only a small chance something will go wrong, but if it does it can be catastrophic," said foundation president Jeremy Rifkin, who has already sued to stop the test. "I think it makes no sense to go along with this."

Residents in the country's top vegetable-producing county, and self-named "Salad Bowl of the Nation" also brought their concerns to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday night.

The board scheduled a Jan. 27 hearing to consider implementing an emergency land-use ordinance prohibiting such tests.

Protesters demonstrated outside the Oakland headquarters of Advanced Genetic Services Inc., which has received approval from federal and state agencies to begin

spraying a patch of 2,400 plants in northern Monterey County. The company must notify the Environmental Protection Agency and surrounding property owners 15 days before it begins spraying.

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