Extent

145 folders, approximately 8,645 pages

Summary

This collection consists of records related to the Clinton Administration’s policies regarding agricultural biotechnology, specifically the creation and use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). It contains correspondence, press material, reports, Congressional testimony, memoranda, research materials and emails. These materials address topics including international trade negotiations with the European Union, food safety and labeling, and research on GMOs.

Scope and Content Note

The materials in FOIA 2013-0836-F are a selective body of documents responsive to the topic of the FOIA. Researchers should consult the archivist about related materials. FOIA 2013-0836-F contains records regarding the Clinton Administration’s policies regarding agricultural biotechnology, specifically concerning the creation and use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). The discoveries regarding the structure and properties of DNA in the 1940s and 1950s laid the foundation for the transfer of genes from one organism to another in the second half of the twentieth century. The email also contains communications and interagency approvals between the White House, the USDA and the FDA. The NSC Cables include reports on trade negotiations, particularly with the EU, and talking points for use in those negotiations. The NSC Emails contain correspondence between NSC staff guidance regarding trade-related correspondence with foreign officials, the development of press guidance, and DC meetings on GMOs.

Biographical Note

In the 1980s, the first field tests of an antibiotic-resistant tobacco plant occurred. By the mid-1990s, the FDA had given marketing approval to GMO varieties of canola, corn, cotton, potatoes, soybeans, squash, and potatoes. Proponents of agricultural biotechnology argued that genetic modification was the answer to producing food for a growing population. Some of the plants, such as corn containing the bacillus thuringiensis gene, produced natural insecticides. This prevented the loss of crops to pests, as well as eliminated the exposure of agricultural workers to chemical pesticides. Many felt that genetic modification was in the same category as the cross breeding that human farmers have engaged in for millennia. Indeed, the FDA's held the official position that, as long as the new genetic material did not change the principal structure of the plant, there was no need for mandatory labeling or approval. Opponents argued that the creation of GMOs held unknown consequences for environmental and human health. There were concerns that GMO plants produced proteins that were potentially allergenic to humans. Others worried that these plants would interbreed uncontrollably with unmodified plants. In the late 1990s, Cornell University researchers conducted a study that seemed to indicate that pollen from genetically-modified corn was fatal to monarch butterflies. For many, the fears were confirmed in 2000 when Starlink corn, a genetically modified species not approved for human consumption, was found in Taco Bell brand taco shells. European Union (EU) Counsel Directive 90/220 required the approval of all GMO plants intended for release in member countries. Though it approved genetically modified corn in 1998, EU resistance to American GMOs remained a trade issue throughout the Clinton Administration. From 1998 until 2004, there was an unofficial ban on the import of any GMO crops intended for cultivation. Public opinion in the EU was decidedly against GMOs, and many European supermarkets refused to carry products containing them. In 1997, the EU ruled in favor of requiring mandatory labeling of all GMO products. The Clinton Administration, though it did consider labeling proposals, opposed mandatory labels on the grounds that science did indicate a need for labeling and that requiring companies to do so would infringe on free speech. On January 18, 2001, the FDA published a proposed rule that would require biotechnology companies to submit premarket information on bioengineered foods. Responsive material in the White House Office of Records Management (WHORM)-Subject File involves correspondence between members of Congress and President Clinton. Senators and Representatives wrote to the Chief Executive urging that biotechnology and agricultural trade be emphasized in meetings with members

of the European Union (EU). They especially wanted faster approval given to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) so that American farmers would reap increased financial benefits. In the case of Monsanto Corporation there are biographical sketches, talking points, and memoranda concerning a meeting between Clinton and CEO's Robert Shapiro and Steven L. Engelberg. Specifically, the two men wanted pressure put on Romano Prodi, President-designate of the European Commission, to allow their genetically modified soybeans into EU markets. Monsanto stood as the world's leading supplier of that product. However, no GMOs had been permitted to enter Europe in over a year. White House Staff and Office files include press materials, reports, Congressional testimony, and correspondence on agricultural biotechnology as it relates to both domestic and international matters. In the National Economic Council (NEC), the files of Lael Brainard address most of the domestic matters. Materials concerning the international trade issues are located in the National Security Council's (NSC) records. These include the files of Hoyt Lee in the European Affairs Directorate, Ian Bowles in Global Environmental Affairs, as well as John Duncan, Holly Hammonds, Lori Hendrick, Richard Holtzapple, and Richard Samans in International Economic Affairs. NSC Records Management documents consist of domestic and foreign correspondence on trade issues related to GMOs. In addition, the White House Staff and Office files include newspaper articles, agendas, memoranda, papers, drafts, speeches, cables, handwritten notes, reference articles, correspondence, and publications focusing on the topics of GMOs, labeling, food safety, biotechnology, and bioengineering. The papers of Chief of Staff Karen Tramontano address the steps agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) took in the case of GMOs. They thought special care should be paid to making the stance of the U.S. on the issue well known both at home and abroad. Enlisting the help of the United States Information Agency (USIA), these organizations developed a public diplomacy program that included a website and Worldnet broadcasts to spread the word in foreign countries. In the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA), the files of Michael LeBlanc deal in large measure with the reaction of various agencies to the problem of the labeling of agricultural goods produced through biotechnology. A significant memo pertains to the subject of biotech labeling, the food labeling guidelines of Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea are subjected to critical comments by experts from the U.S. government, and a newspaper article is headlined "US-EU Continue Dispute Over Textile Origin,

Labels.” One matter discussed at length—voluntary vs. mandatory labeling. Furthermore, in the papers of Michael LeBlanc the so -called “Frankenstein foods”—gets a considerable amount of attention. Generally covered in articles from magazines or newspapers, this term refers to headlines that appeared in European periodicals opposed to GMOs. Opposition was especially virulent in Britain. According to The Economist, “. . . the hoohah in Britain obscures the fact that there is simply no evidence that the technology used to create GMOs is damaging in any way. That does not mean that individual products will never be unhealthy. But it does mean that GMOs should be approached on a case-by-case basis.” In the National Economic Council (NEC), the files of Robert Lawrence contain graphs and charts regarding GMOs. For instance, there is a graph entitled “How GMOs Complicate U.S. Grain Marketing,” a chart titled “Additional Costs Incurred in Segregating Specialty Crops: The Cases of High Oil Corn and STS Soybeans (model for segregated marketing),” and a chart shows the effects EU restrictions for GMOs had on soybean exports for 1999-2000. Often times the figures employed are accompanied by the following guideline: “CEA/USDA Preliminary Analysis: Do Not Cite or Quote.” The Automated Records Management System (ARMS) emails consist of unclassified communications between White House staff concerning Deputies Committee (DC) meetings on biotechnology, fact sheets, bill drafts, testimony, scholarly articles, policy drafts, memoranda, legislative actions, conference arrangements, and some press releases.

Record Type

Textual

System of Arrangement

Records that are responsive to this FOIA request were found in these collection areas—Clinton Presidential Records: White House Office of Records Management (WHORM) Subject File, Clinton Presidential Records: WHORM (OP), Clinton Presidential Records: White House Staff and Office Files, Clinton Presidential Records: ARMS Emails, and Clinton Presidential Records: NSC Cable, Email, and Records Management Systems. The White House Office of Records Management (WHORM) contains a variety of series created to organize and track documents and correspondence. The WHORM Subject File was compiled by the White House Office

of Records Management and is a series of categories designated by a letter/number combination. In addition, there are WHORM, WHORM Counsel, WHORM (CL), WHORM (OP), WHORM (Too Late), WHORM (Various Offices), and WHORM (Alpha Project) series. Staff and Offices files were maintained at the folder level by staff members within their individual offices and document all levels of administration activity. WHORM files are processed at the document level; whereas, Staff and Office files are processed at the folder level, that is, individual documents are not selected and removed from a folder for processing. While this method maintains folder integrity, it frequently results in the incidental processing of documents that are not wholly responsive to the subject area. The Automated Records Management System (ARMS) is a database that contains email records of the Executive Office of the President. This system maintained unclassified Presidential email. The ARMS dataset is comprised of 7 sub-series of email records called “Buckets.” The buckets include NPR, OPD, POTUS, WHO, CEA, Default, and NSC. ARMS emails are arranged chronologically by creation date. FOIA 2013-0836-F includes WHORM records from these subject codes: [AG] [Agriculture] [BE005] [Patents – Inventions – Copyrights – Trademarks] [CO001-05] [Europe] [FG001-07] [Appointments Granted, Presidential] [FO006] [International Conferences] [TA] [Trade] [TA003] [Exports].

Access

Collection is open to all researchers. Access to Clinton Presidential Records is governed by the Presidential Records Act (PRA) (44 U.S.C. Chapter 22, as amended) and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. 552, as amended) and therefore records may be restricted in whole or in part in accordance with legal exemptions.

Copyright

Documents in this collection that were prepared by officials of the United States government as part of their official duties are in the public domain. Researchers are advised to consult the copyright law of the United States (17 U.S.C. Chapter 1) which governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Provenance

Official records of William Jefferson Clinton’s presidency are housed at the Clinton Presidential Library and administered by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) under the provisions of the Presidential Records Act (PRA).

Processed by

Staff Archivist, 2015. Previously restricted materials are added as they are released.

Last Modified Date

2016-01-12

Container List

View all digitized files in the National Archives Catalog (NAC)

The following is a list of documents and folders processed in response to FOIA 2013-0836-F:
Box 1
Clinton Presidential Records: WHORM: Subject File
Category Case Number
AG 305192
[BE005] 416295
CO001-05 249265SS
263824
281322SS
FG001-07 417041 [Genetically Modified Organisms]
FO006 266117
TA 304700
309867
TA003 149054

Clinton Presidential Records: WHORM: (OP)
419724 [Agri/Washington]
419724 [American Biotechnology Products]
Clinton Presidential Records: White House Staff and Office Files
Chief of Staff
Echaveste, Maria
GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] [OA/ID 16802]
Chief of Staff
Tramontano, Karen
GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] [OA/ID 18974]
Council of Economic Advisors
LeBlanc, Michael
Biotechnology [1] [OA/ID 20923]
Biotechnology [2] [OA/ID 20923]
[Biotechnology Articles, Notes, and Information] [loose] [OA/ID 20927]
GMO [Genetically Modified Organism] – Labeling – Domestic [1] [OA/ID 20923]
GMO [Genetically Modified Organism] – Labeling – Domestic [2] [OA/ID 20923]
GMO [Genetically Modified Organism] – Labeling – Domestic [3] [OA/ID 20923]
GMO [Genetically Modified Organism] – Trade [OA/ID 20923]
GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms]/Labels – Interagency Mtgs [Meetings], 1999-2000 [1] [OA/ID 20927]
GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms]/Labels – Interagency Mtgs [Meetings], 1999-2000 [2] [OA/ID 20927]
Box 2
GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms]/Labels – Interagency Mtgs [Meetings], 1999-2000 [3] [OA/ID 20927]
GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms]/Labels – Interagency Mtgs [Meetings], 1999-2000 [4] [OA/ID 20927]
GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms]/Labels – Interagency Mtgs [Meetings], 1999-2000 [5] [OA/ID 20927]
[Standards for Genetically Modified Organisms] [loose] [1] [OA/ID 20923]
[Standards for Genetically Modified Organisms] [loose] [2] [OA/ID 20923]
[Standards for Genetically Modified Organisms] [loose] [3] [OA/ID 20923]
Stiglitz, Joseph
Agriculture – Biotechnology [1] [OA/ID 9551]
Agriculture – Biotechnology [2] [OA/ID 9551]

Wu, Vivian
Agricultural Biotechnology [OA/ID 21177]
Domestic Policy Council
Freedman, Tom
Genetically Modified [OA/ID 17544]
Genetically Modified Foods [OA/ID 17544]
GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] [OA/ID 17544]
Liu, Eric
Food Safety – GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] [1] [OA/ID 103889]
Food Safety – GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] [2] [OA/ID 103889]
National Economic Council
Brainard, Lael
BIOTECH – Glickman 7/99 [OA/ID CF 1360]
Clinton Presidential Records: White House Staff and Office Files (continued)
National Economic Council
Brainard, Lael
BIOTECH – GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] COS [Chief of Staff] (7/99) [OA/ID CF 1360]
BIOTECH – GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] DC [Deputies Committee] (7/99) [OA/ID CF 1360]
BIOTECH – Trade & Biosafety (7-8/99) [OA/ID CF 1360]
Box 3
BIOTECH (8/99) [OA/ID CF 1360]
BIOTECH – Environmental Safety (9/99) [OA/ID CF 1360]
BIOTECH – Monsanto (9/30/99) [OA/ID CF 1360]
BIOTECH – GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] [OA/ID CF 1360]
BIOTECH – Food Safety (10/99) [OA/ID 1360]
BIOTECH PC [Principals Committee] (11/99) [OA/ID CF 1360]
BIOTECH BIOSAFETY (1/00) [OA/ID CF 1360]
BIOTECH – Organic Rule (2/00) [OA/ID CF 1360]
BIOTECH – Rollout (5/00) [OA/ID CF 1360]
BIOTECH – Codex (5/00) [OA/DI CF 1360]
Biotechnology/Food Safety (3/00) [1] [OA/ID CF 1361]
Biotechnology/Food Safety (3/00) [2] [OA/ID CF 1361]
Lawrence, Robert
Trade – Genetically Modified Organisms [1] [OA/ID 24014]

Trade – Genetically Modified Organisms [2] [OA/ID 24014]
Trade – Genetically Modified Organisms [3] [OA/ID 24014]
National Security Council
European Affairs
Yee, Hoyt
Biotech [OA/ID 3002]
Global Environmental Affairs
Bowles, Ian
Agriculture Biotech/USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] [Binder] [1] [OA/ID 3395]
Box 4
Agriculture Biotech/USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] [Binder] [2] [OA/ID 3395]
Agriculture Biotech/USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] [Binder] [3] [OA/ID 3395]
Agriculture Biotech/USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] [Binder] [4] [OA/ID 3395]
Agriculture Biotech/USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] [Binder] [5] [OA/ID 3395]
International Economic Affairs
Duncan, John
G-8: G-7 Environmental and Biotech Issues (October 1999, Dresden Sherpa) [OA/ID 2861]
Clinton Presidential Records: White House Staff and Office Files (continued)
National Security Council
International Economic Affairs
Duncan, John
APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation] – Biotechnology [OA/ID 3132]
WTO [World Trade Organization] – GMO [Genetically Modified Organism]
Strategy Deputies Meeting [DC], July 30, 1999 [OA/ID 3935]
Trade – GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] [1] [OA/ID 4025]
Trade – GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] [2] [OA/ID 4025]
Trade – Principals [PC Meeting] on Biotechnology, October 1999 [OA/ID 4025]
OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] – Biotechnology Mandate (GMOs) [Genetically Modified Organisms] [OA/ID 4055]

Hammonds, Holly
Biotechnology – Monsanto [OA/ID 2885]
Hendricks, Lori
Biotech – GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] [OA/ID 2139]
Holtzapple, Richard
[G-7/G-8 1999 Cologne Summit] – GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] [1] [OA/ID 2223]
[G-7/G-8 1999 Cologne Summit] – GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] [2] [OA/ID 2223]
Box 5
[G-7/G-8 1999 Cologne Summit] – GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms] [3] [OA/ID 2223]
Samans, Richard
Biotechnology [1] [OA/ID 3944]
Biotechnology [2] [OA/ID 3944]
Biotechnology [3] [OA/ID 3944]
Biotechnology [4] [OA/ID 3944]
Biotechnology [5] [OA/ID 3944]
Biotechnology [6] [OA/ID 3944]
Biotechnology [7] [OA/ID 3944]
Box 6
Biotechnology [8] [OA/ID 3944]
Biotechnology [9] [OA/ID 3944]
Biotechnology [10] [OA/ID 3944]
Biotechnology [11] [OA/ID 3944]
Biotechnology [12] [OA/ID 3944]
Biotechnology [1] [OA/ID 3946]
Biotechnology [2] [OA/ID 3946]
Biotechnology [3] [OA/ID 3946]
Biotechnology [4] [OA/ID 3946]
Box 7
Clinton Presidential Records: Automated Records Management System [Email]
OPD [OA/ID 250000]
[Agriculture]
12/04/1997 – 08/11/2000]
WHO [OA/ID 500000]

[Agriculture]
[12/04/1997 – 07/21/2000]
CEA [OA/ID 950000]
[Agriculture]
[09/11/1998 – 08/16/2000]
Default [OA/ID 1100000]
[Agriculture]
[11/26/1996 – 11/16/2000]
OPD [OA/ID 250000]
[Biotechnology]
[05/02/1999 – 09/26/2000]
WHO [OA/ID 500000]
[Biotechnology]
[06/22/1999 – 10/16/2000]
[01/13/2001] [1] [1]
[01/13/2001] [1] [2]
Box 8
[01/13/2001] [2] [1]
[01/13/2001] [2] [2]
CEA [OA/ID 950000]
[Biotechnology]
[09/24/1998 – 11/16/2000]
Default [OA/ID 1100000]
[Biotechnology]
[11/13/1995 – 03/15/2000]
NSC [OA/ID 1200000]
[GMO…]
[05/05/1999 – 01/31/2000]
[02/02/2000 – 05/29/2000]
[06/12/2000 – 08/20/2000]
Clinton Presidential Records: Tape Restoration Project (TRP) [Email]
Default [OA/ID 1100000]
[Agriculture & Biotechnology]
[12/04/1997]
Clinton Presidential Records: NSC Cables, Emails, and Records Management System
NSC Cables

Jan 1993 – Dec 1994
[GMO…]
[01/11/1994 – 12/12/1994] [OA/ID 505000]
Jan 1995 – Dec 1996
[GMO…]
[01/24/1995 – 12/29/1995] [OA/ID 510000]
[03/04/1996 – 12/13/1996] [OA/ID 510000]
Jan 1997 – Dec 1998
[GMO…]
[01/14/1997 – 03/26/1997] [OA/ID 520000]
Box 9
[04/01/1997 – 05/28/1997] [OA/ID 520000]
[06/04/1997 – 08/28/1997] [OA/ID 520000]
[09/11/1997 – 12/31/1997] [OA/ID 520000]
[01/08/1998 – 03/27/1998] [OA/ID 520000]
[04/02/1998 – 05/29/1998] [OA/ID 520000]
[06/04/1998 – 06/26/1998] [OA/ID 520000]
[07/02/1998 – 07/31/1998] [OA/ID 520000]
[08/03/1998 – 12/23/1998] [OA/ID 520000]
Jan 1999 – Dec 2000
[GMO…]
[02/05/1999 – 04/26/1999] [OA/ID 530000]
[07/03/1999 – 07/30/1999] [OA/ID 530000]
Box 10
[08/09/1999 – 10/29/1999] [OA/ID 530000]
[11/04/1999 – 12/22/1999] [OA/ID 530000]
[01/19/2000 – 06/29/2000] [OA/ID 530000]
[07/03/2000 – 09/29/2000] [OA/ID 530000]
[10/12/2000 – 11/27/2000] [OA/ID 530000]
[12/01/2000 – 12/22/2000] [OA/ID 530000]
Jan 2001
[GMO…]
[01/05/2001 – 01/19/2001] [OA/ID 540000]
NSC Emails
Exchange – Record (Sept 97 – Jan 01)
[GMO…]

[03/19/1998 – 06/23/1999] [OA/ID 620000]
[07/01/1999 – 12/15/1999] [OA/ID 620000]
[01/21/2000 – 10/22/2000] [OA/ID 620000]
Box 11
Clinton Presidential Records: NSC Cables, Emails, and Records Management System (continued)
NSC Emails
Exchange – Non-Record (Mar 97 – Jan 01)
[GMO…]
[03/18/1998 – 12/22/1999] [OA/ID 630000]
[01/19/2000 – 07/17/2000] [OA/ID 630000]
NSC Records Management System
[GMO…]
9703857 [OA/ID 1624]
9708111 [OA/ID 1656]
9708265 [OA/ID 1657]
9802523 [OA/ID 2028]
9803429 [OA/ID 2036]
9803514 [OA/ID 2037]
9803516 [OA/ID 2037]
9805002 [OA/ID 2049]
9805181 [OA/ID 2050]
9908265 [OA/ID 2759]
0000371 [OA/ID 4073]
0004525 [OA/ID 4098]
0005975 [OA/ID 4106]

Content Available Online