

JOINT SIGN-ON STATEMENT

FAO Symposium on Biotechnology: The biotechnology industry runs the show

The undersigned representatives of peasant and other Civil Society organizations, men and women, express our concern and alarm about the *FAO International Symposium on "The Role of Agricultural Biotechnologies in Sustainable Food Systems and Nutrition"*¹ to be held at FAO headquarters in Rome on 15-17 February 2016.

We are concerned as to why FAO has decided to hold this Symposium, and why now. We remember the disastrous last attempt by FAO to act as an undercover agent for biotechnology companies, by organizing the International Technical Conference on Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 2010.²

We are alarmed that FAO is once again fronting for the same corporations, just when these companies are talking about further mergers amongst themselves, which would concentrate the commercial seeds sector in even fewer hands. FAO should act as a knowledge center, rather than as a promoter of the ideological approach of the private sector. Unfortunately the program for this symposium is designed to showcase the "benefits" of GMOs, artificial genetic constructs created with possibly even more dangerous technologies, and other biotechnologies held by a handful of TNCs.

Last year FAO hosted an international symposium on agroecology and three regional meetings to discuss with governments and civil society how to move the agroecology agenda forward.³ Those activities were much closer to the way that FAO should act, as a center for knowledge exchange, without a hidden agenda on behalf of a few. Yet in this case, truly useful peasant-based technologies must take a backseat to those that only serve to advance corporate profits.

It is clear that, through the FAO, industry wants to re-launch their false message that genetically engineered crops can feed the world and cool the planet, while the reality is that nothing has changed on the biotech front. GMOs don't feed people, they are mostly planted in a handful of countries on industrial plantations for agrofuels and animal feed, they increase pesticide use, and they throw farmers off the land.⁴ The industrial food system that it promotes is one of the main drivers of climate change.⁵

If anything, the situation has worsened over the past years:

¹http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/agphome/agribiotech/Programme_Overview_detailed.pdf

²<http://www.gmwatch.org/news/archive/2010/11990-fao-condemned-for-shameless-promotion-of-gmos62>

³http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/news-events-bulletins/detail/en/item/346167/icode/?no_cache=1

⁴<https://www.grain.org/e/4720>

⁵<https://www.grain.org/e/5102>

- The quality of private sector agricultural research has been declining, even as their expenditures have increased, leading to vulnerability among seed and crop chemical input companies;
- As a result, mergers and acquisitions are being planned with, and among, the Big Six seed/pesticide corporations that already control 75% of global private sector research and development in agriculture;
- In desperation the surviving companies are calling for “climate-smart” agriculture, demanding protection from anti-cartel/competition regulators, pushing for more intellectual property rights and for increased public subsidies to allow them to go ahead with their plans.
- The same corporations are going beyond conventional GMO plant varieties toward “extreme biotech” strategies such as synthetic biology to create new genetic constructs, and trying, once again, to overturn the UN moratorium against Terminator seeds. Not only do they ignore the rights of farmers, they are using biotechnologies to patent plant genes that are already in peasants’ fields and that we have selected ourselves. With collaboration of the Seed Treaty, the so called Divseek program offers totally free access to all the gene sequences of the seeds that we have given free of charge to the gene banks. With the new biotechnologies for editing the genome, international corporations re-compose these genes in order to patent them. They want to forbid us to produce our own seeds and oblige us to buy their patented GMOs every year as well as their toxic pesticides, indispensable to grow those GMOs.
- In animal husbandry and fisheries where transgenic salmon and pigs already exist, we see the same scenario, the strengthening of industrial production and the increase in the use of antibiotics....

We remember the last time FAO allowed the biotech giants to push them into an international conference, in Guadalajara in 2010, at which the FAO worked hard, as in this case, to limit the involvement and participation of La Vía Campesina and other CSOs, and was publicly condemned for shameless promotion of GMOs by many organizations across the world⁶.

Why does FAO limit itself to corporate biotechnology and deny the existence of peasant technologies? It is time to stop pushing this narrow corporate biotech agenda. The vast majority of the world's farmers are peasants, and it is peasants who feed the world. We need peasant-based technologies, not corporate biotechnologies.

It is high time that FAO gets its priorities clear. Rather than allowing corporations to push their biotechnology agendas, FAO should forcefully pursue agroecology and food sovereignty as the path to feed the world and cool the planet!

⁶ <http://www.gmwatch.org/news/archive/2010/11990-fao-condemned-for-shameless-promotion-of-gmos62>

International and Regional Organizations

ActionAid International
African Biodiversity Network (ABN)
Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)
Asian Peasant Coalition (APC)
Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD)
Campaña Mesoamericana para la Justicia Climática
CICODEV Africa
Coordinación Regional del Frente Parlamentario contra el Hambre de América Latina y el Caribe
Comité pour l'Annulation de la Dette du Tiers Monde (CADTM International)
Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE)
Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO), Brussels
ETC Group
Focus on the Global South India, Thailand and Philippines
Friends of the Earth International
Global Campaign to Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity
GRAIN
Greenpeace International
Growth Partners Africa –GPA
Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC)
International Indian Treaty Council (IITC)
La Via Campesina
Movimiento Agroecológico de América Latina y el Caribe (MAELA)
NO VOX INTERNATIONAL
Pan-Africanist International
Pelum Association, Africa
Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo (PIDHDD Regional)
Red interamericana de economía solidaria de latinoamérica y el caribe. RIPESS LAC
Red por una América Latina Libre de Transgénicos
Red de Acción en Plaguicidas y sus Alternativas para América Latina (RAPAL)
RIPESS Europe
RIPESS Intercontinental
Slow Food
Society for International Development (SID)
Solidarity Economy Europe
Transnational Institute (TNI)
Urgenci Europe
Urgenci International Network
World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP)
World Public Health Nutrition Association
World Rainforest Movement (WRM)

National and Local Organizations

Acción Ecológica, Ecuador
ADTM International, Belgium
African Center for Biodiversity, South Africa and Tanzania
Agriculture Sovereignty Ghana
AGRECOL, Germany
AIAB, Italy
ALIANZA DERECHO HUMANO A LA ALIMENTACIÓN –ADHAC, , Guatemala
Alianza por una Mejor Calidad de Vida/Red de Acción en Plaguicidas de Chile, RAP-
Chile
Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)
Alliance for Sustainable & Holistic Agriculture (ASHA), India
ALTERNATIVAS (COMCAUSA), Mexico
AMAR Environment Defense Association, Brazil
APROMAC Environment Protection Association, Brazil
Articulação de Agroecologia na Bahia- (AABA), Brazil
Articulação Semiárido Brasileiro (ASA), Brazil
Asian Peasant Coalition (APC)
Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD)
Associação Brasileira de Agroecologia (ABA), Brazil
Associação Gaúcha de Proteção ao Ambiente Natural (AGAPAN), Brazil
Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Agroecologia (AOPA), Brazil
Association Citoyenne de Défenses des Intérêts Collectifs (ACDIC), Cameroon
ATTAC Argentina
ATTAC France
ATTAC CADTM, Morocco
Attac Côte d'Ivoire
Australian Food Sovereignty Allianc
BioScience Resource Project, USA
Bread for the World, Germany
CADTM, Maroc
Campaña Yo No Quiero Transgénicos, Chile
Censat Agua Viva - Amigos de la Tierra, Colombia
Center for Research and Documentation Chile-Latin America, Germany
Centre Europe-Tiers Monde (CETIM), Switzerland
Centro de Derechos Humanos "Fray Francisco de Vitoria OP", A.C., Mexico
CENTRO DE DIREITOS HUMANOS E EMPRESAS (HOMA), UFJF, Brazil
Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos “Segundo Montes Mozo S.J.” ,
Ecuador
Centro Ecologico, Brasil
Çiftçi-SEN (Confederation of Farmers' Unions), Turkey
CSMM, Ecuador
CCFD-Terre Solidaire, France
Coalition for a GM-Free India, India
Coldiretti, Italy

Colectivo Revuelta Verde, Mexico
Colectivo VientoSur, Chile
Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, Ecuador
Community to Community, USA
Comunidades Campesinas y Urbanas Solidarias con Alternativas, México
Conselho Nacional das Populações Extrativistas (CNS), Brazil
Cooperativa por un Ambiente Biodiverso y Sustentable, CAMBIOS, S.C., Mexico
Cooperativa Semilla Austral, Chile
Coordinadora de Movimientos Populares para la Integración Latinoamericana
Coordination Climat Justice Sociale, Switzerland
Earthlife Africa, South Africa
Ecologistas en Acción, Spain
Ekologistak Martxan, Spain
Educación, Cultura y Ecología, A. C. (Educe AC.), Mexico
FASE - Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional, Brazil
Food First, USA
Food Sovereignty Ghana
Foro Ciudadano de Participación por la Justicia y los Derechos Humanos, Argentina
Friends of the Earth U.S.A.
Fronteras Comunes A.C., Mexico
Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho (FESPAD), El Salvador
Fundación Mundubat, Basque Country
GE Free New Zealand
Générations Futures, France
Global Justice Alliance, USA
Grupo Coletivo Triunfo de Agricultores Familiares, Brazil
Grupo de Agroecología y Soberanía Alimentaria (GASA), Panama
Grupo de Coordinación Ampliado del Grupo Carta de Belém, Brazil
GUERREROS VERDES A.C., Mexico
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, USA
Institute for Research and Promotion of alternatives in development (IRPAD), Mali
Instituto de Estudios Ecologistas del Tercer Mundo, Ecuador
Jubileu Sul, Brasil
Kenya Biodiversity Coalition
Kenya Food Rights Alliance – KeFRA
Kenya Food Rights Alliance –KeFRA
La Asamblea Veracruzana de Iniciativas y Defensa Ambiental (LAVIDA)
Laboratorio de Investigación en Desarrollo Comunitario y Sustentabilidad, Mexico
La Fédération Unie de Groupements d’Eleveurs et d’Agriculteurs (FUGEA), Belgium
Living Farms, India
Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Chile
MASIPAG, Philippines
Mesa Nacional frente a la Minería Metálica (MNFM), El Salvador
Mesa Permanente por la Justicia Laboral (MPJL), El Salvador
Millennium Institute, USA
Mouvement "Nous Sommes la Solution", Senegal

Mouvement d'Action Paysanne (MAP), Belgium
Movement Generation, USA
Movimiento de los Pequeños Agricultores-MPA, Brazil
Movimiento Nacional en Defensa de la Tierra (MOVITIERRA), El Salvador
Navdanya, India
Never Ending Food, Malawi
Organic Systems, New Zealand
Other Worlds, USA
PACS - Institute Alternative Policies for the Southern Cone of Latin America, Brazil
PAPDA, Haïti
Peuples Solidaires-ActionAid, France
PLATAFORMA DE ECONOMÍA SOLIDARIA (PECOSOL), Guatemala
rede de Comunidades Tradicionais Pantaneira, Brazil
Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia, Brazil
Red de Accion por los Derechos Ambientales (RADA), Temuko, Chile.
RED DE HUERTOS URBANOS DE TALCA, Chile
Red de Semillas Libres de Chile
RED SOCIOAMBIENTAL SEMILLAS, Chile
Red Mexicana de Acción Ecológica y Pacifista [Red ECOPAZ]
RELUFA (Network for the Fight Against Hunger), Cameroon
Save Our Seeds, Germany
Semillas de Vida, Mexico
Serviço de assessoria a organizações populares rurais (SASOP), Brazil
Solidaridad Suecia - América Latina, Sweden
South Durban Community environmental Alliance, South Africa
Sri Lanka Nature Group
Sunray Harvesters, India
Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania (SAT)
Tanzania Alliance for Biodiversity (TABIO), Tanzania
Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM), Tanzania
Tarım Orkam-Sen, Turkey
Terra de Direitos, Brazil
Terra Nuova, Italy
The Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and Biodiversity Conservation
TOXISPHERA Environmental Health Association, Brazil
Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE), South Africa
Unidad de la Fuerza Indígena y Campesina (UFIC), México
Unidad Ecológica Salvadoreña (UNES), El Salvador
Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), Palestine
US Food Sovereignty Alliance, USA
USC CANADA
Vía Orgánica, Mexico
War on Want, UK
WhyHunger, USA