

CALL TO INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Agricultural Biodiversity on the line

In preparation for MOP 4 / COP 9 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (Bonn, 12 - 30 May 2008), about 30 people from 25 organisations and 10 countries met in Berlin from 21 to 23 May 2007 to discuss Agricultural Biodiversity issues that relate to the CBD agenda, from the perspective of civil society.

The purpose of our discussions was to identify key issues that we propose as a focus for information and lobbying work by CSOs in the run up to, and during, CBD/ MOP 4 / COP 9.

We concluded that unless there is priority given to agriculture issues by Civil Society and Social Movements, they will not be discussed properly and in depth in the MOP / COP process. Please join us to prioritise these issues. *(See table at end of this paper for list of UN meetings in this process.)*

In the run-up to MOP 4 / COP 9, we concluded there should be a focused discussion on the type of agriculture needed for the future: an agriculture that will provide healthy foods, secure livelihoods, dynamic, diverse ecosystems and a vital rural environment for all peoples. The current emphasis, within the MOP / COP process on industrial food systems, privatisation of genes and nature and genetic engineering is leading us to complete dependency and corporate control over our foods, seeds, livestock, fish and biodiversity in general and is thus threatening a peoples' approach within the COP/MOP process. This is leading international biodiversity policy and biodiversity reality into a dead end and disaster.

We need an agriculture in which local communities, in both the North and the South, control their agricultural biodiversity, local economies and landscapes. This will enable the realisation of food sovereignty, which is fundamental for biodiversity and the quality of life for all the world's peoples.

We need Freedom of choice, Freedom of seeds: GMOs are in the way of what is needed.

We recognise that the myriad agricultural biodiversity that we have in the world is the result of the work of women, indigenous peoples, farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk and others in managing and developing this diversity and this must not be obstructed. It must continue. Biodiversity hotspots often coincide with indigenous territories and therefore are of special importance. Indigenous peoples often have a sustainable way to use and foster biodiversity in their territories.

So, we believe that it is very important to use the opportunity of the MOP / COP to explain to the general public the interdependence between localised food systems based on agricultural biodiversity, which are environmentally benign and respect animal welfare, and the local quality of life. We want to stress the fact that biological diversity depends on and needs cultural diversity. Additionally, government negotiators, NGOs and others could benefit and better focus their work if there were a better understanding of these complex and vital interrelationships.

We must, therefore, raise consciousness about the often negative economic, social and ecological impacts of the industrial and globalised food system now further exacerbated by the present head-over-heels rush towards agrofuel production.

Thus, we will be proposing a number of special actions, events and campaigns that will focus on this issue and on people's demands and experiences and we are inviting civil society organisations and social movements to give us feedback on these ideas and proposals and to contribute their own.

We propose a focus on 4 issues:

FOR MOP 4

- Liability

FOR COP 9

- Agrofuels¹ vs. Local control over Agricultural Biodiversity
- Farmers' and Livestock Keepers' Rights and related ABS
- Terminator technology / GURTS

¹ Agrofuels is the term increasingly used by civil society groups and social movements to describe large-scale biofuel production through industrial agriculture and, often, monoculture plantations. It is not to be confused with small-scale biofuels that are so important for the 2 billion people who do not have sufficient access to energy. Agrofuels are produced on a large-scale, using aggressive, industrial technologies. Production is becoming controlled by large transnational corporations, consolidating links between agribusinesses and oil companies. This is rapidly converting land use from food provision to fuel production and it undermines food sovereignty.

LIABILITY

The major issue at the next MOP (12-17 May 2008) will be a regime for liability and redress (Art.27) for damage from transboundary movement of GMOs (LMOs). A proposal from G77 and China is expected in October. The issue is also on the table of the EU and German agenda (liability in the GMO law and adaptation of the EU environmental liability directive).

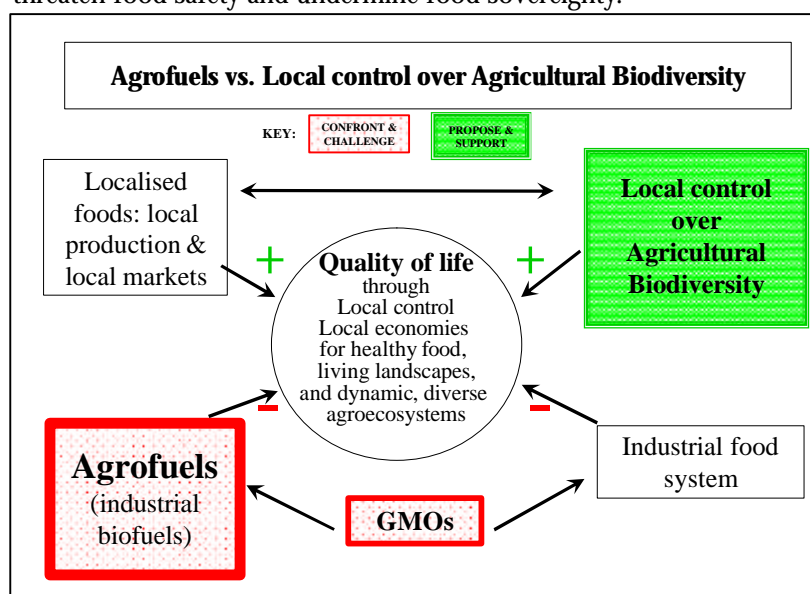
Liability is a good tool to publicly expose risks of GMOs. If insurance companies will not cover this and producer countries oppose international rules then there must be something wrong with GMOs. Our focus should be on the prime role of the Biosafety Protocol to establish the legal right to say no to GMOs, and their import into a country, and the demand for full liability and redress for unwanted contamination. **GMOs threaten the freedom of seed (farmers), diversity (environment) and choice (both farmers and consumers).**

Special emphasis needs to be given to the contamination of Seed Banks and repositories (*in situ* and *ex situ*) as well as Centres of Origin, which are mainly in the South. We will look for opportunities in the agenda of MOP and COP to put this issue on the table. **Gene banks, repositories and Centres of Origins should, by definition, be GM free zones!**

We propose to organize a series of events during the MOP week and in the run-up to this event in May. We will highlight the general "GMO-Free Europe welcomes the GMO-Free Regions of the World" approach. Activities could include: A global summit of GMO-Free Regions (in the broadest sense) during the MOP; A "Farmers Jury" event between the MOP and the COP, inviting, especially, farmers from the South; A No-GMO demonstration; A public fair / bazaar to celebrate the diversity of seed.

AGROFUELS VS. LOCAL CONTROL OVER AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY

Promoting agrofuel production – through monocultural plantations producing fuel for the cars of the rich in a globalized economy - is to a large extent the antithesis of the development and conservation of agricultural biodiversity by local communities. It will weaken rural economies, destroy biodiversity, threaten food safety and undermine food sovereignty.



Agrofuels are not an appropriate answer to climate change: their net emission reductions often range from weakly positive to negative. Instead, they will be a strong incentive for increased deforestation and forcing small farmers off the land. Agrofuel production will also facilitate the spread of GMOs.

The huge monocultures needed will destroy biodiversity and will also require large quantities of pesticides and fertilizer. A result of this shift in land use is that food prices (meat and crops) are rising and will continue to do so.

In sum: Fuel will compete with Food! Monoculture plantations will eliminate local Biodiversity!

A radical change away from the industrial food system to economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, farmer-controlled production with healthy nutrient cycles (low external input farming) and based on the local management of agricultural biodiversity, also maintaining local biomass production for local people, their soils and their biodiversity, is the only integrated and effective answer to climate change and loss of agricultural biodiversity. Also, only diverse agroecosystems with comprehensive agricultural biodiversity will have the resilience to adapt to climate change.

COP 9 includes both issues – industrial biofuels / agrofuels and agricultural biodiversity – on its agenda.

Through the COP 9 process we have the opportunity to raise these issues internationally - promoting agricultural biodiversity and confronting industrial agrofuels. Unless civil society gets organised and pressures negotiators and politicians, these subjects will be perverted through the industrial agriculture lobby into the opposite of what we want.

FARMERS' AND LIVESTOCK KEEPERS' RIGHTS AND ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING

Farmers' Rights

There is a clear international obligation of the Governing Body of the International Seeds Treaty (ITPGRFA) to support traditional and local seed systems. Its financial mechanism should thus include support to such seeds systems.

During the 2nd Governing Body meeting of IT PRGFA in October 2007, a farmers' seed fair will be held and the European Coordination of Farmers'/Peasants' Seeds will be launched. In addition, it is proposed that an analysis of the various experiences of farmers in different regions with patents and Plant Variety Protection laws and other seed regulations is presented. It should pinpoint legislation that is restrictive and legislation that promotes on-farm management of PGRFA. Included in these activities (e.g. Side Event) should be the sharing of experiences of currently active farmers' / peasant seed systems in the North and the South.

The ways in which Seed banks link with farmers' seed systems ("ex situ" and "in situ" / on-farm management) need to be revised with changed approaches and objectives: towards responding to the needs of farmers/peasants who created the basis of the collections and away from the needs of the biotech industry.

With regard to climate change, agroecologically sound systems provide resilience to changing production pressures including water shortages, new pests and diseases etc.. For example, organic agricultural systems retain more water in the soil and can withstand droughts for longer than chemically-treated soils. Systems with a wide agricultural biodiversity also enable adaptation of varieties through careful selection by farmers and gardeners and through participatory plant breeding by farmers with the help of scientists. GMOs are not necessary for effective solutions.

Livestock Keepers' Rights

The realisation of Livestock Keepers' Rights will promote the sustainable use of animal genetic resources and ensure local control over these resources. The rights include the right to breed, the right to grazing territories, the right to water as well as the right to participate in policy/decision making. Competing land uses like the establishment of exclusive types of protected areas and agrofuel and other plantations are challenging the livelihoods of pastoralists and other livestock keepers.

Compared with crops, the genetic diversity of livestock is smaller. Of the 40 domesticated animals in the world, only a few thousand breeds are left. The genetic diversity, expressed as effective population size, is very narrow in the major industrial cattle and pig breeds. Poultry genetic diversity is a trade secret of the four companies that control the global supply of day-old chicks to the poultry industry. Industry concentration of production and control over animal genetic resources is extremely high.

Because of privatization of breeding in many countries, public access to information on the genetic holdings of the industry is necessary in order to monitor the status of animal genetic resources. Subsidies to industrial livestock production and export distort the market forces and put smallholder livestock keepers at disadvantage. The same is true for animal health regulations, as seen in recent years with regard to Avian Flu. Large public investments are made in livestock biotechnology research programmes, especially in the US and EU, including support to patent applications. Conventional breeding is becoming increasingly rare.

Activities are planned during the CGRFA in June, the Interlaken meeting in September and at COP 9.

Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)

The ABS negotiations are threatened by the interests and needs of the biotech industry and their focus on the purpose of dividing *monetary* benefits. This approach is based on exclusive IPRs which go against the collective nature of local traditional knowledge systems. This promotes the commodification and privatisation of biodiversity. Discussion about the vital role of the biodiversity developed and used by local communities is out of the picture. We totally reject this commodification / privatization approach. Any negotiations or discussion on benefit sharing should be on the basis of customary systems of local communities and their use and sharing of local biodiversity. Local and indigenous communities should have the right to deny access to biodiversity (genetic resources) on their territories in order to defend local traditional knowledge systems and to protect biodiversity from being considered in international agreements mainly as a commodity and privatised through IPRs.

TERMINATOR TECHNOLOGIES / GURTs

The suicidal Terminator technologies (v-GURTs - Genetic Use Restriction Technologies) are designed to prevent the free use of seeds and the sowing of farm-saved seeds. It is a negation of Farmers' Rights, undermining food sovereignty and endangering food security and biodiversity. At COP 8 the CBD reaffirmed the moratorium on Terminator in Decision V/5 because it violates Farmers' Rights. However, the decision also calls for more scientific data on Terminator technologies.

But we don't need new data. We reject all Terminator technologies because they prevent the free use of seeds and increase corporate control over the food system. However, at the same time as the CBD reaffirmed the moratorium on GURTs, the EU agreed funding for a €5m project on "Transcontainer" technologies (www.transcontainer.org) that will run until 2009 in 8 European Member States. It will promote GMOs and Terminator technologies.

The purpose of the Transcontainer project is to fast-track Terminator-GMOs approvals, increase the use of GMOs in agriculture and its public acceptance and enable 'co-existence'! At COP 9, there may be new calls to legalise Terminator. It is important to realize that Terminator is on the agenda of COP and not of the Biosafety MOP because the very definitions of the Biosafety Protocol do not accept "biological containment" as a functioning option. And so we need to increase awareness about the new challenges and dangers which are coming up from the promotion of Terminator technologies in the guise of coexistence measures and to keep in mind that if Terminator-GMOs are accepted as effective for allowing coexistence, it will also facilitate the promotion of GMO trees, pharmaceutical plants etc. **We reject Terminator technologies, further research on them and all attempts to promote GMOs.**

SOME SUGGESTED ACTIONS, SO FAR, INCLUDE:

- A Video-Clip website. We are looking for good stories to present (EED).
- Film festival in October (BUKO-Agrar Koordination).
- The "Golden Bantam" campaign to plant open pollinating seed against GMOs in private gardens around Bonn (Save our Seeds)
- Public seed fair and biodiversity market during the MOP / COP in Bonn
- Organize visits to GMO free Regions near Bonn for official delegations; GM free supermarkets could be involved.

UNITED NATIONS MEETINGS CONCERNING AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY IN RUN-UP TO CBD MOP 4 / COP 9

The timetable of official events during this process at which our information can be presented includes:

FAO: 11 th session of the Commission on Genetic Resources - CGRFA 11	Rome, Italy	11-15 June 2007
CBD: 12 th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice - SBSTTA 12	Paris, France	2-6 July 2007
FAO: 1 st International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture	Interlaken, Switzerland	3-7 September 2007
CBD: <i>Ad Hoc</i> Open-ended Working Group on Liability and Redress in the context of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety	Montreal, Canada	22-26 October 2007
FAO: 2 nd meeting of Governing Body of International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources - GB2 IT PGRFA	Rome, Italy	29 October - 2 November 2007
CBD 13 th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice - SBSTTA 13	Rome, Italy	18-22 February 2008
CBD: 4 th Meeting of the Parties of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety - MOP 4	Bonn, Germany	12-19 May 2008
CBD: 9 th Conference of the Parties - COP 9	Bonn, Germany	22-30 May 2008