

NO GE Trees!

NO Case by Case!

Nearly 150 organizations around the world responded to the social and ecological threats of GE trees by demanding a global ban on the release of GE trees into the environment. These organizations, gathered in only 1 week's time and only from countries where research on the genetic modification of trees is being carried out (or has in recent years), are listed below, and an excerpt of the statement is found on the following page. The language being considered by SBSTTA at this point regarding GE trees is a big step backward from the decision on GE trees at COP-8. The decision to apply the precautionary approach to GE trees must be strengthened into a moratorium, not watered down. Delegates wishing to learn more about the impacts of GE trees are invited to attend a side event on the issue today at lunch in the Green Room.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 21st Paradigm, USA 2. A SEED Europe, The Netherlands 3. Acción Ecológica, Ecuador 4. AG Wald der Fom Umwelt und Entwicklung, Germany 5. Agenda 21 Anil&Azul - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 6. Agenda Regional de La Araucanía, Chile 7. Agrupación ambientalista Koyam Newen, Chile 8. Agrupación de jóvenes profesionales mapuche Konapewman, Chile 9. Alianza por una Mejor Calidad de Vida (RAP-Chile), Chile 10. Amigos de la Tierra España – Friends of the Earth Spain, Spain 11. AOPA - Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Agroecologia, Brazil 12. Argonautas Ambientalistas da Amazônia, Brazil 13. AS-PTA Assessoria e Serviços a Projetos em Agricultura Alternativa, Brazil 14. Associação de Programas em Tecnologias Alternativas-APTA, Brazil 15. ASSOCIAÇÃO GAÚCHA DE PROTEÇÃO AO AMBIENTE NATURAL - AGAPAN, Brazil 16. B.C. Food Systems Network, Canada 17. Bergwaldprojekt, Germany 18. Biofuelwatch, United Kingdom 19. BUND - Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz in Deutschland Friends of the Earth Germany 20. CAA - Centro de Agricultura Alternativa, Brazil 21. Californians for GE-Free Agriculture, USA 22. Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN), Canada 23. Caney Fork Headwaters Association, USA | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 24. Carbon Trade Watch, International 25. CAXTIERRA (Comisión de Apoyo X Tierra), Uruguay 26. Centro de Agricultura Alternativa do Norte de Minas - CAA NM, Brazil 27. Centro de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos – CDDH, Brazil 28. Centro de Estudos Ambientais (CEA), Brazil 29. CENTRO ECOLOGICO BORDE RIO, Chile 30. Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica de Rio Pomba (CEFET-Rio Pomba), Brazil 31. CLOC (Coordinadoria Latinoamericana de las Organizaciones del Campo), Republica Dominicana | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 32. Coalition for Safe Food, Powell River, British Columbia, Canada 33. COATI - Centro de Orientação Ambiental Terra Integrada - Jundiá, Brazil 34. CODEFF / Amigos de la Tierra, Chile 35. Comissão Pastoral da Terra - Diocese Itabuna/Bahia, Brazil 36. Cooperación Unión Araucana "XAPELEAI TAIÑ KIMVN", Padre Las Casas, Chile 37. Crescente Fértil, Brazil 38. Cumberland Countians for Peace & Justice, USA 39. Development Fund, Norway 40. Dogwood alliance, USA 41. Down to Earth - the International Campaign for Ecological Justice in IndonesiaUnited Kingdom 42. Ecodevelop - Publikation und Dienstleistung für ökosoziale Entwicklung, Germany 43. Ecologistas en Acción, Madrid, Spain 44. ESPLAR - CENTRO DE PESQUISA E ASSESSORIA, Brazil 45. ETC Group, Canada 46. Fair-Fish, Switzerland 47. Federação de Órgãos Para Assistência Social e Educacional - FASE/ES, Brazil 48. Federation of Alberta Naturalists, Canada 49. FERN, United Kingdom 50. FoE Australia 51. FoE Czech Republic 52. Forest Caucus Steering Committee of the Canadian Environmental Network, Canada 53. Forest Peoples Programme, United Kingdom 54. Fórum Carajás, Brazil 55. Fórum de Mulheres do Espírito Santo, Brazil 56. Fórum em Defesa da Zona Costeira do Ceará, Brazil |
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57. Forum Ökologie & Papier, Germany
58. Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), United Kingdom
59. Friends of the Earth Australia
60. Friends of the Earth Europe
61. Fundação Vitória Amazônica, Brazil
62. Fundacion Sociedades Sustentables de Chile, Chile
63. Gaia Foundation, International
64. GE Free New Zealand, Aotearoa/New Zealand
65. GEEMA - Grupo de Estudos em Educação e Meio Ambiente, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
66. GENANET - focal point gender, environment, sustainability, Germany
67. Gene ethical Network, Germany
68. Gesellschaft für Ökologische Forschung, Munich, Germany
69. Global Forest Coalition, International
70. Global Justice Ecology Project, International
71. GM Freeze, United Kingdom
72. GM-Free Dorset Campaign, United Kingdom
73. Green Press Initiative, USA
74. Greenpeace, International
75. Grupo Ambientalista da Bahia - Gambá, Brazil
76. Grupo Mamangava, Brazil
77. GT Ambiente / AGB-Rio e AGB-Niteroi, Brazil
78. IDESA (Instituto de Desenvolvimento Social e Ambiental), Brazil
79. Indiana Forest Alliance, USA
80. Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN), USA/Canada
81. Institute for Responsible Technology, USA
82. Institute for Social Ecology, USA
83. Instituto Ambiental Viramundo - Ceará, Brazil
84. Instituto para o Desenvolvimento Ambiental - IDA, Brazil
85. International Tribal Association, USA
86. Kentucky Heartwood, USA
87. Latin American Network Against Monoculture Tree Plantations, International
88. Les Amis de la Terre (Friends of the Earth France), France
89. Mapuexpress informativo digital mapuche, Chile
90. MIRA-SERRA, Brazil
91. Movimento de los Trabajadores Rurales sin Tierra de Brasil - MST, Brazil
92. Muslim Aid, United Kingdom
93. Nandor Tanczos, Member of Parliament, Green Party, Aotearoa/New Zealand
94. NEADist - Núcleo de Educação Ambiental Continuada e à Distância, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
95. Network for a free GE Latin America, International
96. Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility, United Church of Christ, USA
97. Nguallen Pelu Mapu / protectores de la tierra, Chile
98. Northern Heritage Association, Finland
99. Northwest Resistance Against Genetic Engineering, USA
100. Northwoods Wilderness Recovery, USA
101. OroVerde - Tropical Forest Foundation, Germany
102. Pacific Indigenous Peoples Environment Coalition (PIPEC), Aotearoa/New Zealand
103. Plataforma Transgenicos Fora (Portuguese GM-Free Coalition), Portugal
104. Prairie Red Fife Organic Growers Cooperative Ltd., Canada
105. Prodema - UFC, Brazil
106. RAE - Rede de Educação Ambiental Escolar, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
107. Rainforest Relief, USA
108. Red por una América Latina Libre de Transgénicos, Ecuador
109. Rede Ambiental do Piauã - REAPI, Brazil
110. Rede de Educadores Ambientais da Baixada de Jacarepaguá, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
111. Rede de Integração Verde, Brazil
112. Rettet den Regenwald, Germany
113. Rising Tide North America, USA
114. Robin Wood, Germany
115. Safe Alternatives for our Forest Environment (SAFE)USA
116. Sierra Club, USA
117. Sindicato dos Trabalhadores de Rio Pardo de Minas - MG, Brazil
118. Sociedade Angrense de Proteção Ecológica, Brazil
119. Society for a Genetically Engineered British Columbia, Canada
120. Soil Association, USA
121. Stop GE Trees Campaign, International
122. Terra de Directos, Brazil
123. UITA - Unión Internacional de Trabajadores de la Alimentación y la Agricultura, International
124. Union of Ecoforestry in Finland
125. Union paysanne, Québec, Canada
126. UNORCA - Unión nacional de organizaciones regionales campesinas autónomas, Mexico
127. Via Campesina Brazil
128. Via Campesina Caribe
129. Via Campesina Internacional/América del sur
130. Washington Biotechnology Action Council, USA
131. Wild Virginia, USA
132. Women's Environmental Network, United Kingdom
133. World Development Movement, United Kingdom
134. World Rainforest Movement, International
135. Worldforests, Scotland
136. Worldview, USA
137. Xarxa de l'Observatori del Deute en la Globalització, Catalunya, Estado español

GE Tree Statement

Below is a brief description of the statement and letter signed by 137 groups.

Statement signatories begin by stating that their “concern is based on the fact that the genetic manipulation being undertaken is aimed at consolidating and further expanding a model of monoculture tree plantations that has already proven to result in serious social and environmental impacts in many of our countries.”

The statement then provides a number of examples on how current research would impact on the environment, given that trees are being genetically manipulated for.

The signatories remind country delegates that “the last Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP-8) adopted decision VIII/19”, which “recommends Parties to take a precautionary approach when addressing the issue of genetically modified trees” and urge them “to definitely ban GE trees - including fields trials – because of the serious risks they pose on the Planet’s biological diversity.”

Full letter and signatories available at: http://www.wrm.org.uy/actors/BDC/SBSTT_A13/GE_Trees_Campaign.html



On CRP.2 Forests –

Martin Kaiser, Greenpeace

Listening to the interventions by parties on review of the PoW on biological diversity in the plenary two days ago, you got the impression that the major challenges for the conservation and sustainable use of forest biological diversity are widely understood: climate change, financing of the implementation of the PoW, rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, international trade with agrofuels, illegal logging and related trade and GE trees.

If the CRP.2 on Forests is sent without changes to COP9 and adopted, it will be the third and final verse of a minnesinger's song of this Convention! The CRP.2 marginalizes the CBD as a 'secretary' of other non-legally binding fora and as a source for scientific recommendations. How can parties argue that decisions based on 'urged' or 'invited' make any difference to previous decisions and strengthen implementation?

Outside the FAO building, others are discussing new and additional financing for stopping deforestation and forest degradation and the urgent need to stop emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. In the plenaries' interventions it has been widely reflected, that biodiversity and livelihood has to be integral part of any new mechanism. CRP.2 is almost 'silent' about it.

Some most recent facts: Only three weeks ago the Brazilian government announced that the rate of deforestation in the Amazon has increased drastically in the last months: it raised from 234 square kilometres in August 2007 to 948 square kilometres in December. This is the highest rate of deforestation that has ever been recorded at that time of the year in Brazil. Executive Secretary Jose Capobianco stated that these are "extremely concerning figures".

Since SBSTTA12, there has been strong and new evidence regarding the negative environmental and social impacts of the production of many biofuels. Therefore the SBSTTA recommendation XII/7 that only used action words like 'invite', 'identify', 'bring' to the attention' are not longer adequate. SBSTTA13 should strengthened the recommendation in view of the increasing urgency. The negative impact on deforestation is quite obvious, but CRP.2 wants to postpone any decision until 2010. By than most of the industrial scale investments will be made and being reversibly based on unsustainable high quota.

CRP.2 Forests: the adequate answer of a convention to global threats and challenges? NO! Start to rescue this convention and the world's forests.

Via Campesina – Intervention to CBD SSTA 13

Via Campesina, the global movement of small-scale farmers in five continents, ROPPA, which represents the farmers and pastoralists of West Africa, and various civil society organisations here present are waiting for the CBD to indicate through which process it will recognise the rights of farmers, livestock keepers, fisherfolk, indigenous people and civil society NGOs to participate in decision making on the future of agricultural biodiversity.

Peasant farmers do not just conserve agricultural biodiversity, they renew and add to it continuously. The collective knowledge that they use is not only traditional but, with modern agro-ecology, they continuously innovate in order to ensure sustainable use of natural ecosystems and to protect food sovereignty. They contribute to the struggle against global warming by fixing organic matter in soils.

Industrial agriculture aggravates climate change by destroying soils and water resources and in consuming large quantities of fossil fuel energy in chemical fertilisers, pesticides, mechanisation and international transport. Ever since industry imposed its seeds and new livestock breeds, nowadays genetically modified or cloned, the decline of agricultural biodiversity has not stopped. In order to defray their investment in patents, industry is commercialising as few varieties and species as possible. Research into developing sterile seeds directly threatens biodiversity and peasants' livelihoods and must continue to be prohibited.

In order to enable adaptation to climate change and to meet new demands for food, farmers must secure access to their traditional seeds that are locked in gene banks, and reclaim their collective rights to conserve, use, exchange and sell their farm-saved seeds and their breeding animals. ...

The collective rights of peasant farmers to access land for food must be defended against its appropriation for profit. With industrial production of genetically modified feed for livestock in rich countries, or of agrofuels for their vehicles, industrial tree plantations constitute the principal threat against forest biodiversity. Rich countries must renounce their illegitimate demands for debt repayment from poor countries, which forces them to destroy forests and their food crops in favour of industrial export crops.

Finally, marine biodiversity and artisanal fishing on a small scale must be protected from destruction by industrial fisheries in all the world's seas, and not only in limited protected areas. Small scale farmers and livestock keepers who practice agro-ecology, as well as small-scale fisherfolk and forest peoples, are key to the protection of agricultural biodiversity and ecosystems. We demand that the CBD decisively recognises their central role. Thank you for your attention.

[Full statement at <http://www.ukabc.org/sbstta13.htm#b3>]

Notes from SBSTTA

SBSTTA grinds -

Éric Darier, Greenpeace

By the time you read this article we shall know, or maybe not, what the final proposed text of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity will look like... If you had hoped for the most exciting text on agricultural biodiversity, you will be disappointed. At the time of writing this up-date (19:00), the plenary (now contact group) is going through the text line by painful line.

Repeated interventions and amendments by just a few countries such as Brazil and Canada for 'improving' or 'clarifying' the text seem intended to extend the debate into eternity. This means that more and more Parties with small delegations become exhausted enough to accept the suggestion that only a small group finalise the text - carrying on late into the evening or even through the night. It is during these late and restricted sessions that more powerful players can use their muscle and weight to push through the issues. Nothing new here... but sometimes it is worthwhile reminding ourselves of the reality.

The purpose of these tactics is to water down, to the maximum, any criticism of current industrial agriculture practices and avoid any meaningful debates on the impact of agrofuels for biodiversity.

The final text could well be very, very dull and will likely make little sense for most people outside the CBD, let alone addressing fundamental problems... Let's hope that I am wrong!

Australian splits the Gang of Four - Sandy Gauntlett, PIPEC

New Australian Foreign Affairs Minister signalled on February 17 that the country was preparing to endorse the declaration on Indigenous Rights, thus reversing the Howard government's opposition. The move leaves Australian allies Canada, the United States and New Zealand alone in opposing the declaration. New Zealand in particular will feel the move being also led

by a Labour government seen as traditionally liberal.

The Australian move comes only days after Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologized to indigenous leaders over the former policy on stolen generations and at the same time as deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard signalled a reversal of the Howard Government hardline on indigenous communities and the formation of a bipartisan committee on indigenous affairs to try and ensure certainty and continuity for Australia's indigenous peoples and an attempt to ensure the policy was not so politically dependant. At the same time Indigenous Affairs Minister, Jenny Macklin, announced a reversal of the Howard government permit system for Indigenous Communities in the Northern Territory.

Ironically, while opposition leaders were criticizing the move in televised speeches, based on concerns around alcoholism and child abuse, the federal government also announced a new injection of 50 million to fight these problems within remote communities.

The potential for Australia to move into a clear leadership role on Indigenous rights in the Pacific region seems very real and will leave neighbor New Zealand in an increasingly isolated position and pose a real threat to its public image of a liberal and democratic country with a history of good race relations. This image has already been damaged by the introduction of the Foreshore and Seabed legislation, the raids on and imprisonment of indigenous activists and its refusal to endorse the declaration on indigenous rights.

Forests are not only standing carbon -

Christoph Thies Greenpeace

Governments this week in Rome at the CBD SBSTTA 13 are negotiating how to organize better cooperation between the CBD and the UNFCCC, following the latest findings of IPCC and others suggesting a much stronger link between biodiversity and climate than previously thought. Tropical deforestation is

estimated to contribute approximately one fifth of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions. In order to keep global warming as far as possible below 2°C compared to pre-industrial temperature, immediate action is required to stop deforestation and forest degradation.

Given the importance of forests and other ecosystems for the global climate, and the severe crisis of both biodiversity and climate, SBSTTA 13 must recommend more than joint liaison groups to tackle tropical deforestation and other biodiversity/climate related issues. It must recommend joint implementation by UNFCCC and CBD of REDD and other climate change adaptation and mitigation activities relevant to biodiversity.

If REDD activities are implemented by UNFCCC alone, there is a high risk that forests are being reduced to only their carbon values and that biodiversity safeguards, indigenous and other social issues are not adequately addressed. Biofuels are being proposed as a solution to the climate crisis, even though many biofuel projects will worsen the situation with increased greenhouse gas emissions, massive biodiversity loss and social disruption through large-scale conversion of natural ecosystems. GE trees are being promoted as a climate solution - adding more risks to people and ecosystems. Ocean fertilization in the name of mitigating climate change is playing Russian roulette with marine ecosystems.

Ministers and Heads of Government must discuss this at the COP 9 Ministerial Segment in Bonn and come up with a plan for joint implementation by UNFCCC and CBD of REDD and other climate change mitigation activities relevant to biodiversity.

The proposal for an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on biodiversity and climate reporting to UNFCCC is a good idea if it can really influence UNFCCC with its findings instead of only adding yet another report to the pile of existing documents. There is no alternative path to drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions in a socially just way protecting and stopping the loss of biodiversity at the same time.