

Peoples' Earth Summit Press Release

Why Africa SHOULD Reject GE Contaminated Food Aid

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WSSD, Johannesburg, South Africa

Issue:

Three international reports have been released promoting Genetically Engineered (GE) food in the lead up to WSSD. Each report is funded by parties with a vested interest for the success of GE food.

African nations have united against this biased research:

1. World Food Programme Report saying GE Food Aid should be accepted.
2. WTO - WHO Report saying GE is not harmful.
3. UN Economic Commission for Africa is pro GE farming and medicine.

Africa's Response:

- Uganda and Tanzania have both offered Zambia GE free food. They argue that there is enough food in Africa to help Zambia. However, ineffective infrastructure hampers distribution of this food to drought-stricken areas.
- The US is disposing of its rejected food on Africa. Africa will not allow itself to become a dumping ground. This is another form of colonisation: first through slavery, then economic colonisation and now the control of food and medicine through GE, creating total dependency through patented and terminated seed and medicines.
- Food crops given as aid are often planted. This leads to contamination as Mexico has experienced. There must be solidarity across Africa for strict controls and decisions.

Solutions to Africa's regular droughts are not food aid from the North nor technology.

It is:

- o Enhancing traditional systems of food production where farmers control their own diverse livelihood systems.
- o Improving infrastructure so food can be transported from areas of surplus to areas of need within Africa as a priority

Zambia's Response:

Dr Lewanika, a scientific advisor to the Zambian government explains why Zambia rejects GE Food Aid and why other African countries should do so too:

- Zambia has had public debates on the issue. The majority of small scale farmers said they would rather starve than use GE food. Hunger is a real issue in Zambia, however, there is still time to prepare and to provide GE free food.
- Aid was not offered - money (\$51 million) was given as a loan to the private sector to import maize from the USA. When this maize was imported Zambia was not informed that it was GE contaminated. It is important to get prior consent from a country rather than imposing GE contaminated food grain on a nation.
- Currently, there is no regulatory system in place in Zambia to evaluate, accept or reject Genetically Modified Organisms. The debate about safety, human health and the environment still rages on. Until the issue is clear, Zambia chooses to take precautionary steps.

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Notes to Editors: For more information contact Sangeeta Haindl on 0834 468 8523/Marise du Preez on 0825781833.

- Dr Lewanika, Scientific adviser to the Zambian government.
- Dr Tewolde Gebre Egziabher, Spokesperson for the African Biosafety Proposal.
- Fred Kalibiwane, Organizer of the Farmers Convergence.
- Million Belay, Steering Committee of the African Civil Society Group.