



Monthly Bulletin
on
Genetic Engineering
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Contents

GE & Biosafety Issues

1. Death of Sheep: GEAC Stands Exposed!
2. GE Food worries exaggerated? *Listen to a major Molecular Biologist*

New pests feast on Bt cotton

3. Mealy bug threatens cotton crop in Punjab

GE & food

4. Scientists warn against GE foods
5. Stop influx of illegal GE foods

GE around India

6. Kerala Government against GE seed trials: Minister
7. India adopts new set of guidelines for GE plants and foods
8. Sustainable agriculture: A world beyond GE crops
9. Farmers Protest against NBRA
10. SAGE Demands More Debate on NBRI

GE & Law

11. Monsanto Compensates Schmeiser for Genetic Contamination

GE Globally

12. GE & Organic Crops; Can They be yoked Together
13. Austria Continues to Resist GE Products
14. All Are Watching Poland!
15. New Remedy against GMOs!! n- Greenpeace - Romania goes sarcastic!!

GE & BIOSAFETY ISSUES

1. Death of Sheep: GEAC Stands Exposed!

The Supreme Court nominee to the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), Dr. P.M. Bhargava, has called the bluff of the committee, which attributed the sheep death in Andhra Pradesh two years ago to nothing connected to the sheep grazing on Bt cotton leaves.

The GEAC had concluded that the death might have been due to high content of nitrates/nitrites, residues of hydrocyanide (HCN) and organophosphates, which are common constituents of pesticides used in cotton cultivation. It had in effect given a clean chit to Bt cotton.

The GEAC's observations were based on two reports — one from the Directorate of Animal Husbandry based in Hyderabad and the other from the Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izzatnagar, Uttar Pradesh. It also noted that the Andhra Pradesh State Government had examined the issue.

The Contradiction

However, Dr. Bhargava had found the reports of the two institutes as also the State Government's letter totally contradicting the GEAC's version. For instance, the State Government's letter to the GEAC had stated that the samples were "negative for HCN, Nitrates, Nitrites, Alkaloids and Glycocide."

Even the report from the Veterinary Research Institute, U.P. had clearly stated that the Bt cotton samples did not show the presence of HCN, Nitrate/Nitrite, Alkaloids and Glycocides. And in a communication to the GEAC last month, Dr. Bhargava had contested the committee's version on HCN and noted that "HCN is not a common constituent of any pesticide."

Apart from the cause of death, the GEAC had stated that "prior to the release of Bt cotton in India, a battery of studies to assess the safety of Bt toxin to the environment and animals was conducted."

"This is not true either," noted Dr. Bhargava. For instance, the letter from the Andhra Pradesh Government had observed that "the biosafety studies were not taken up in sheep and also trials did not include continuous grazing/feeding of complete Bt cotton plants by animals."

No Safety Data

Even the letter from the Sri Venkateshwara University, Andhra Pradesh, which was made available to Dr. Bhargava by the GEAC, contradicts the committee's version. The letter clearly notes that "the biosafety studies on grazing on Bt cotton crop by sheep are lacking."

The letter from the Andhra Pradesh Government had also stated that "biosafety studies should be on applied aspects like continuous grazing of animals on harvested or intact Bt cotton plants."

"So there is enough reason to say that no serious studies have been done to ensure the safety of Bt cotton in animals," Dr. Bhargava emphasized.

And in a communication to the GEAC last month, Dr. Bhargava had stated, based on all the reports, that "this would be a major argument to suspend all cultivation of Bt cotton until we have definitive data on the toxicity of Bt plants to animals on the field."

2. GE Food worries exaggerated? *Listen to a Major Molecular Biologist*

http://www.business-standard.com/common/news_article.php?leftnm=10&bKeyFlag=BO&autono=328397

Since April 2 this year, there has been a palpable air of tension at the meetings of the Genetic Engineering Approvals Committee (GEAC) at Paryavaran Bhavan in Delhi. That's when **Pushpa Mitter Bhargava**, regarded by many as the architect of biotechnology in India, began attending the meetings of the apex regulatory body on genetic engineering as a special nominee of the Supreme Court. Known for his role in setting up the country's premier research institution, the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology in Hyderabad, Bhargava is taken aback by the lax ways of the GEAC and "going purely on the documentation provided by it" is surprised that no one has pointed out the serious lapses in the testing of genetically modified (GM) crops. In a detailed interview to *Latha Jishnu*, he explains why there should be a five-year moratorium on Bt cotton and field trials of other crops till we clean up the system. (Dr Bhargava's views were made available to eight GEAC members for their comments a week ago, but none chose to respond.)

Why should there be a moratorium on Bt cotton?

A great deal of work has been done in the last few years which calls for a total recall of Bt cotton. For instance gene flow studies have shown that we need to be cautious about the risks posed by GM crops to other plants. That's why on May 16, the UN Conference on Biodiversity concluded that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) were responsible for damage to other crops. In India, the reported cases of Bt allergy in the north have not been investigated. In AP, there have been reported cases of a large number of sheep dying after feeding on the Bt cotton plants.

GEAC claims that the AP government had blamed these sheep deaths on the residue of pesticides used

The letter from the Directorate of Animal Husbandry, Hyderabad clearly says none of the pesticide residues mentioned by the GEAC were found in the samples. The letter also gives the lie to another claim about studies having been done on the impact of Bt toxin on the environment and animals. In fact, the department says biosafety trials must be conducted on the effect of continuous grazing on harvested or intact Bt cotton plants and has warned shepherds not to allow their animals to graze on Bt cotton fields in the interim.

What do you make of this?

At every stage there is a bias if not deceit all the way. I am only looking at the data provided by the GEAC itself.

Now that we are going in for GM food such as Bt brinjal and 24 other crops, how safe are these for human consumption given that vegetables and fruits will carry Bt toxin?

The GEAC website had the same result on the presence of Bt protein in the uncooked varieties, for both the non-GM and GM brinjals! Whatever data is available for Bt brinjal is partial and even suspicious.

The GEAC says its data is available on the website for anyone to check.

The website carries conclusions and not the data, and there is an extremely important distinction between these.

With Bt cotton accounting for 60 per cent of the crop (both legal and illegal seeds) is a ban feasible?

Yes, of course. After all, drugs are withdrawn from the market when new information comes to light. Switzerland has just announced a moratorium on GMOs till 2012 and has found tremendous support from the people.

What will a moratorium achieve?

We can clean the regulatory process. Most important, we should set up a national facility for doing all the necessary tests on GMOs and training skilled and objective inspectors. This institution should be run jointly by the government and civil society. So far there has been no supervision at all of field trials and only now is the GEAC preparing a draft document on this. We also need a comprehensive protocol on risk assessment. Right now there are too many unethical practices.

Can you elaborate on this?

The trials being conducted in West Bengal on Bt okra, for instance, were started on the basis of approval granted by the local panchayat, surely the least knowledgeable about the risks of GMOs. The state and district committees on biotechnology gave conditional approval only six months later in February 2008. Worse, the agricultural university monitoring the field trials has given a damning report on the way it is being conducted.

What is your primary concern?

No comprehensive risk assessment has been done. Some of the significant tests that have not been done are chronic toxicity, DNA fingerprinting, proteomics analysis, and studies on reproductive interference. The most worrying issue is that whatever test data has been given to GEAC is provided by the applicant company itself, such as on the toxicity and allergenicity of the GMO. There is no proof that the company actually did these tests, and as far as I am concerned no valid data exists.

Is it because there was no independent validation?

Some tests were done by an outside party (not validation) such as Intox, Rallis and Sriram Institute. But this makes no difference because the samples were provided by the applicant companies and were not double blinded. How do we know that the samples were of the GM variety?

What is a sane policy on GM?

We should first determine if there is an alternative. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has done a lot of work, on around 85 crops, to prove the efficacy of the integrated pest management and bio-pesticide protocol. This is a far cheaper and better way to increase farm production but has been ignored. Remember, only 11 countries in the world have gone in for GM crops and of these, just four, the US, Canada, Brazil and Argentina account for the bulk.

Are worries on GM food being exaggerated by the anti-GM lobby?

Just look at the recent study published in the proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in the US, one of the most widely cited journals in the world. It says that dietary DNA can find its way into the blood, opening up the possibility of GMO DNA transforming somatic cells. Such transformations can have a major deleterious effect on the host.

New pests feast on Bt cotton

3. Mealy bug threatens cotton crop in Punjab

<http://www.expressindia.com:80/latest-news/Mealy-bug-threatens-cotton-crop-in-state/324076/>

The cotton crop in Haryana, especially Bt cotton, is under threat from mealy bug, which may cause extensive damage to the crop if not controlled in time, said sources in the Haryana Agriculture Department.

In the past, the cotton crop in the state had often been damaged by the American Bollworm. In 2002, the bug had caused severe damage to the crop, ing a number of state farmers in the process. It was generally believed that Bt cotton was pest-resistant, but B.S. Duggal, Additional Director, Haryana Agriculture, says Bt cotton is safe only from bollworm and not from the mealy bug.

Bug Makes Inroads into Vidarbha

Deadly gift from Monsanto to India; A Letter

<http://freepage.twoday.net/stories/4961144/>

To follow up on your articles, Organic Cotton Beats Bt Cotton in India (SiS 27) and Message from Andhra Pradesh: Return to organic cotton and avoid the Bt cotton trap (SiS 29), I enclose photographs of mealy bug infested cotton plants in the demonstration plots of different seed companies in Vidarbha: Ganga Kavari, Paras Brahma, and Banny. All of the plots have the Bollgard label. These mealy bugs have never been in our region on any plants before Bt cotton was introduced. I learned about the devastation of cotton in China two years ago. This alerted me to photograph and video the demonstration plots regularly. So, anybody can say with confidence now that the mealy bug has entered Vidarbha cotton fields through the Bt cottonseed.

Now when the cotton plants have died, the mealy bug is shifting to nearby plants. By mid June, farmers will go for the new cotton crop or plant another crop. But before that, the bug will have multiplied like any thing. It has shifted to Congress weed nearby, and many other weeds and plants in gardens.

Read the rest of the letters and see the photographs here <http://www.i-sis.org.uk/SIS38lettersToTheEditor.php>

GE & food

4. Scientists warn against GE foods

<http://www.asianage.com/archive/htmlfiles/India/Scientists%20warn%20against%20GM%20foods.html>

New Delhi: Scientists warn that the genetically modified (GM) foods that are set to hit the market will do so without having undergone mandatory safety assessments.

Thirty-two crops are currently being researched across 111 government and 50 private institutes with 14 having entered the trial stage.

These, they decry, will increase health risks to the general public.

BT brinjal is expected to hit the market within the next six months without undergoing the necessary trials. Switzerland and other European countries have placed a moratorium of 12 years on all GM foods.

Dr Pushpa Bhargava, a genetic biologist and former vice-chairman of the National Knowledge Commission, warned against the flouting of scientific norms to push GM foods into the market.

Speaking at a "Food Safety, Bio Safety and GM Foods" meet organised by Navdanya, Dr Bhargava stated that no comprehensive risk assessment had been done on the effect of Bt plants on either the soil or the surrounding fauna.

Dr V.S. Vijayan, chairman of Kerala State Biodiversity Board, pointed out that tests currently being done to study toxicity and allergenicity were being conducted by Monsanto, the world's largest supplier of seeds, which is pushing for this technology in India, or else by groups who received the samples from the applicant itself.

Key chronic toxicity tests that have long term effects, and can result in cancer and other diseases have not been conducted.

Many scientists believe many of the tests being claimed may never have been conducted in the first place

5. Illegal influx of GE Foods, warns Greenpeace

<http://www.financialexpress.com/news/Stop-influx-of-illegal-GM-food/325115/>

New Delhi - Delay in approval by the government's Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) is leading to massive influx of genetically modified food into the country, the international environment group Greenpeace on Thursday said. It said that this could severely impact public health if not checked by the government.

Drawing attention of the Union Health Minister, Anbumani Ramadoss, Green peace demanded that that the health ministry must ensure that these illegal products are confiscated from the market

Without the approval of GEAC, the sale of genetically modified food is not allowed in the country. According to a Greenpeace statement, the Director General of Health Services, Foreign Trade and GEAC, the agencies involved in regulation of import of GM food have said that no permission has been granted for the import and sale of any GM food in the country other than purified Soya oil.

"Issues regarding the safety of GM products, promoted for human consumption, remain a cause for concern and many countries, including the ones belonging to the European Union continue to restrict GM food from entering their countries," the statement said.

The group said that GEAC has been deferring a decision on the matter for want of trivial details like absence of the representative of the health ministry in the meeting. "There are no laboratories notified or testing protocols issued by the GEAC in its 19 years of service to the country to stop any dumping of GM food into the country," Rajesh Krishnan, Campaigner, Sustainable Agriculture, Greenpeace, said.

GE Around India

6. Kerala Government against GE seed trials: Minister

<http://www.hindu.com/2008/06/15/stories/2008061554830500.htm>

Thiruvananthapuram: Agriculture Minister Mullakkara Ratnakaran has reiterated the State government stand against field trials of genetically modified seeds.

Addressing the "National Summit on GM Crops," organised by the Sastra Vedi, an arm of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee, here on Saturday, Mr. Ratnakaran said the decision not to allow field trials would protect Kerala's spices which had a large market in European countries that were opposed to GM crops and food.

The State Government stand was that the trials should not be conducted when the entire world was debating the pros and cons of GM crops and food. Even in the U.S., which had adopted GM crops on a large scale, the debate was going on with farmers, academics and environmentalists opposing huge multinationals such as Monsanto. Environmentalists had opposed GM crops on the ground that it was against nature.

Out of the 147 countries that participated in the recent U.N. bio safety conference in Bonn, 146 had opposed GM crops. The U.S. was the only supporter of GM crops, Mr. Ratnakaran said.

He also referred to the connection between the country's fight against imperialism and cotton during the freedom struggle to emphasise that the country should be wary of such forces.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs, Vayalar Ravi, also called for a detailed study on the impact of genetically modified (GM) crops on farmers and consumers.

While issues related to productivity, food security and health were important; there were many other related issues that should be tackled before GM crops could be adopted in a large-scale.

He feared that the prices of seeds would increase, forcing a hike in the cost of production and its impact on the consumers.

7. India adopts new set of guidelines for GE plants and foods

[http://greenbio.checkbiotech.org/news/2008-06-27/
India adopts new set of guidelines for GE plants and foods/](http://greenbio.checkbiotech.org/news/2008-06-27/India_adopts_new_set_of_guidelines_for_GE_plants_and_foods/)

A new set of guidelines, standard operating procedures (SOPs) and protocol for safety assessment of genetically engineered plants and foods derived from genetically engineered plants introduced by the Review Committee on the Genetic Modification (RCGM) were adopted by the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) in India.

The new set of procedures is a step in the direction of implementing a rigorous and sound science-based-approval-system for genetically modified crops and foods in India.

The new system which is built on the inter-ministerial expertise on biotechnology including the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Environment and Forest, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Health, will replace the existing cumbersome approval system. The new system includes:

- ◆ Guidelines for the conduct of field trials of regulated, genetically engineered plants in India and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- ◆ Protocol for safety assessment of genetically engineered plants
- ◆ Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) guidelines for the safety of foods derived from genetically engineered plants in India.

CONTACT:

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www.igmoris.nic.in Source: [Genetic Engineering Approval Committee of India](#)

8.Sustainable agriculture: A world beyond GE crops

<http://www.deccanherald.com/Content/Jun202008/editpage2008061974358.asp>

Indian scientists do not promote sustainable technologies because they are disconnected from the farming community. Growing crops without the use of GM seeds and chemical pesticides and yet getting a bountiful harvest is something agricultural scientists have never been taught to believe.

Technology does not merely come as a branded product. If Monsanto's Bt-cotton is a technology, so are the time-tested traditional technologies that farmers have perfected over the years. Why cannot scientists promote safe, reliable, sustainable and healthy technologies?

The fundamental question still remains. Why don't Indian scientists promote sustainable technologies and ecologically viable farming systems instead? The answer is simple. Over the years, they have disconnected themselves from the farming community.

They are unaware of a silent revolution that is sweeping the country. If only the science and technology minister, Kapil Sibal, were to promote the Andhra Pradesh model of NPM cultivation instead of blindly pushing for GM crops, India could easily turn into a global model for sustainable agriculture and healthy living.

9.Farmers Protest against NBRA

<http://www.thehindu.com/2008/06/25/stories/2008062559140300.htm>

Large-scale introduction of genetically modified (GM) crops such as Bt cotton in and around H.D. Kote taluk in Mysore district has raised concerns about the absence of safety norms and ignorance of the biosafety measures that should be in place.

What has upset the farming community is that the Government recently tried to push certain changes to the law without involving farmers when it tried to hold a regional consultation on the proposed national biotechnology regulatory authority. This was opposed by organic farmers who disrupted the proceedings, following which the regional consultation was cancelled.

Vivek Cariappa, an organic farmer and member of the Empowered Committee on Organic Farming, Government of Karnataka, told *The Hindu* that the authorities tried to hold the regional consultation without involving farmers.

Following this, farmers have taken up the issue with the Government to highlight the perils of large-scale introduction of GM crops without safety measures in place.

What has peeved a section of farmers is that the Government is trying to change the law to facilitate the industry, without trying to fix any accountability, according to Mr. Cariappa.

Meanwhile, Mr. Cariappa has questioned the Government as to why seeds of non-Bt variety cotton have been pulled out of the market when the profits are high in non-Bt variety seeds.

Cotton cultivation

It is reckoned that 40,000 hectares of land come under cotton cultivation in H.D. Kote and a majority of the farmers are forced to use the Bt variety seeds.

Raising apprehensions of proliferation of Bt variety, Mr. Cariappa pointed out that according to the protocol, an area one-fourth of the size of the land planted with Bt cotton should be provided with non-Bt variety in the surrounding land as buffer or refuge area, and the seed companies were required to provide the non-Bt variety seeds. But this was being violated by the seed companies and the farmers were using the neighbouring fields as refuge area, he said.

Impact

This would have a serious impact on the farmers as incidence of pests and the increased use of pesticides would increase the economic burden on them and also create a health hazard.

The farmers have drawn the attention of the Government to the implications of the patent law that governs private companies providing GM seeds.

10. SAGE Demands More Debate on NBRI

[This letter was also addressed to Smt Sonia Gandhi, UPA Chairperson and Kapil Sibal, Hon'ble Minister for Science & Technology.]

21, June 2008
Hyderabad

To:

Dr. Manmohan Singh
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India
Govt. of India,
South Block, Raisina Hill,
New Delhi,

Hon'ble Prime Minister,

Sub: Draft National Biotechnology Regulation Bill – & feedback – reg.

The National Biotechnology Bill, being contemplated by your government, is an extraordinary piece of legislation on an issue that critically affects every citizen of this country, either directly or indirectly. Therefore it needs a serious and intensive democratic debate from all quarters of this country. However, we understand from the website (<http://dbtbiosafety.nic.in/inner1.html>) of the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India that the last date for sending the feedback to them on the draft policy on National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority is 22nd June 2008.

We earnestly feel that it has not been given a chance for a detailed discussion and is being hurriedly pushed through. A huge number of farmers' associations, civil society groups, and consumer organizations who are seriously concerned about the impact of biotechnology on agriculture, human and livestock health and welfare,

and its environmental impact, are feeling shortchanged because sufficient time has not been given for an extensive discussion among their constituencies and farming and consumer groups on these issues.

In fact, till date, there has been no conclusive evidence in India that GE crops are beneficial to human and cattle health. On the contrary, there have been a large number of studies and experiences reported from all over the country which indicate that genetic engineering in agriculture, as evidenced from Bt cotton cultivation, has given rise to huge pest problems, soil toxicity and human health problems.

To mention a few, the resurgence of sucking pests on Bt cotton, the huge incidence of mealy bugs in Punjab, AP and Vidarbha, an alarming rise of root rot disease from 2% in 2002, the year Bt cotton was introduced in AP, to 40% in 2007, and five years later, the early evidences of the development of the resistance by bollworms to the Bt cotton, the death of thousands of small ruminants, and allergic reactions to farm labourers who worked on Bt cotton fields have already been recorded evidences in India.

While this is the Indian reality vis-a-vis the impact of genetic engineering on a non-edible crop, it would be extremely dangerous to go ahead with a Bill that will open up the doors for a string of genetically engineered food crops that are waiting in the queue for clearance with the Indian government. Highly respected scientists such as Dr P M Bhargava, former Director of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad and a recipient of the Padma Vibhushan, have openly raised questions about the way biosafety issues have been sidelined by the Indian genetic engineering regulators. Similar apprehensions have been expressed by leading environmental scientists such as Dr Vandana Shiva and Dr Suman Sahai. A number of concerned scientists and environmentalists as well as farmers and consumer organisations have also been questioning the way biosafety has become a casualty in the aggressive push for GM trials as well as the commercial approval being considered by the Government of India, under the relentless pressure exerted by the biotech industry.

Therefore, the debate on the new National Biotechnology Regulation Bill has to tread an extremely careful and sensitive path in obtaining the opinions of as wide a cross-section of Indian society as possible. The feedback from the Indian people has to be elicited very widely through publicity in all the media, print as well as electronic. An announcement on the website of DBT is too insufficient a means for such a debate, since a majority of the Indian population which will be directly affected by the Bill has no means of visiting the government websites to be able to understand what is on the anvil.

In the wake of this situation, we earnestly request your kind intervention to persuade the DBT that the final date to receive the feedback on the proposed draft act be extended by at least six months and be given a wider publicity by translating the draft act into all the local languages so that the people of this country will have an opportunity to respond and to send their feedback.

We hope that this appeal by a wide section of concerned organisations and individuals across the country will receive your serious consideration and support.

Sincerely yours
p v satheesh
Director
Deccan Development Society

GE & Law**11. Monsanto Compensates Schmeiser for Genetic Contamination**

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=9494>

Monsanto accepted their responsibility for the genetic contamination of Schmeiser's canola fields in an out of court settlement between Percy Schmeiser and Monsanto.

In an earlier trial, the Canadian Supreme Court had recognized the legality of the patent protection to Monsanto's Transgene, but at the same time this court had transferred the question about the legality of a patent about life and forms of life to the Canadian Parliament for re-evaluation. In accordance with earlier legal norms the owner of a patent on a certain gene is also the owner of the respective harvest. This question is still pending and has to be re-assessed by the Canadian Parliament.

Since Schmeiser could prove that he had never used Monsanto's either genetically modified seeds or the total-herbicide Roundup Ready going with the Monsanto GM seeds, and that he had indeed no advantage from the pollution and contamination of his harvest, he was acquitted of Monsanto's compensation demands.

In 2005, Schmeiser again found Monsanto GM Rap plants on his fields. He informed Monsanto and demanded that the company remove the plants. Monsanto confirmed to Schmeiser that the plants were Roundup-Ready raps and therefore the property of Monsanto. Referring to the existing judgment that the owner of a plant is also liable for plant contamination damages, Schmeiser had the plants removed professionally and forwarded the removal cost invoice to Monsanto.

In earlier attempts to achieve an out of court settlement, Monsanto had not consented to paying the removal cost amounting to \$660, so Schmeiser subsequently had sued the company. Monsanto would have paid for the contamination damage, but only under the condition that Schmeiser signed a "gag agreement," i.e. he would agree not to talk about the damage case, which would have deprived him and/or his wife of the right for the remainder of their lives to ever speak about the case publicly or to ever again sue Monsanto for contaminating their harvest in future before any court. Schmeiser rejected the demands raised by Monsanto, saying that they were totally immoral. When the judge asked why Monsanto had not simply paid the very small sum of \$ 660, Monsanto's lawyer Richard W. Danyliuk responded that there was a lot more involved than just \$ 660.

One hour before the court hearing was scheduled on March 19, 2008, Monsanto accepted all the demands of Percy Schmeiser as well as their responsibility for the contamination of Schmeiser's fields. As per the terms of the settlement, Monsanto must not only pay for the damage, but also accept Schmeiser's right to inform the public about the background and express his opinion and position about this case in public. The acceptance of responsibility by Monsanto as the owner of the patented Transgene for the contamination of neighbouring fields opens the path for all farmers in the world to demand compensation by Monsanto.

GE Globally**12. GM & ORGANIC CROPS; CAN THEY BE YOKED TOGETHER**

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/53432182v0616534/>

A familiar argument by bureaucrats and policy makers who are in favour of GM crops is that *Why Can't GM Crops and Organics Coexist?* Scientifically this has proved impossible because of the contamination

caused by GM crops to organic crops. If you grow GM crops in an area and if there are organic farmers in the adjacent areas, the organic crops tend to get contaminated because of the pollen flow from GM to organic. This has been proved in many cases. The recent case is that of Percy Schmeiser to whom Monsanto paid huge damages only last week.

A recent Spanish Study has shown that apart from the environmental causes, there are also social causes which defeat organic farmers. They know that GMs contaminate their crops. But to avoid contamination they have to fight with other farmers around them who grow GM. This creates a lot of social tension and ultimately the organic farmers give up. The Spanish study shows that organic farming has gotten reduced by 75% due to this problem in one area of Spain.

This is very relevant for us because such conflicts will be evident in the Indian situation in the years to come. Organic farmers who are essentially small and marginal in India will be unable to fight the large powerful commercial farmers who will tend to grow GM.

The introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Europe has been characterized by controversy. In 2002, the European Union introduced the concept of "coexistence" as a compromise solution that, through the establishment of science-based technical measures, should allow the market to operate freely while reducing policy conflicts on GMOs. However, the concept remains highly contested and the technical measures difficult to apply. In this context, the concept of coexistence and its proposed implementation both fail to resolve previous conflicts and actually work to generate new ones through the individualization of choice and impacts. Considerations of the social conditions in which the technology and the management measures are implemented were not taken into account. This resulted in the promotion of biotechnological agriculture over other alternatives.

AN IMPOSSIBLE COEXISTENCE: TRANSGENIC AND ORGANIC AGRICULTURE - UAB BARCELONA

The cultivation of genetically modified maize has caused a drastic reduction in organic cultivation of this grain and is making their coexistence practically impossible. This is the main conclusion reached in one of the first field studies in Europe carried out by a researcher of the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, who has analysed the situation in Catalonia and Aragon, Europe's main producers of transgenic foods.

The study was carried out by researcher Rosa Binimelis of the UAB Institute of Environmental Science and Technology. Binimelis is working on the European project ALARM (Assessing Large Scale Risks for Biodiversity with Tested Methods) and analyses the application of the concept of coexistence between Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and conventional organic agriculture in the European Union. The results of the research have been published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* (April 2008).

Before GMOs were introduced, previous studies in this area were carried out using modeling or experimental cases, due to the lack of commercial fields in most European countries. Researcher Rosa Binimelis, however, analyses the situation in Catalonia and Aragon, where the commercial cultivation of transgenic crops began in 1998. This research is therefore unique and especially relevant to the European Commission's assessment scheduled for this year. It involved qualitative techniques by means of 51 in-depth interviews and participant observation (twenty-two interviews with farmers while the remaining were held with key political figures, including government representatives, scientists, academics, as well as NGO members and other organisations and platforms).

The study found that, the coexistence system makes it difficult and expensive to segregate GM from organic and conventional production. There are no specific silos for organic maize while only a minority of cooperatives in

the region restricts the use of GMOs. In parallel, organic agriculture is growing in Spain in the number of producers and hectares. However, this trend is reverted in the case of maize.

The author's analysis reveals a social confrontation between proponents and opponents of GM technology regarding the consequences it can have and the measures to be taken in regulating and taking responsibility for any cases of admixture. Confrontation also exists when trying to define technical measures that would guarantee this coexistence. Finally, the study analyses the difficulties organic farmers would face in order to claim compensation if admixture took place, due to technical uncertainties in measuring the level of "contamination" or its origin, but also because of social reasons. Many farmers who could sue for damages prefer not to do so in order to avoid any local confrontations in small villages. As a result, the area devoted to organic maize was reduced by 75% in Aragon from 2004 (year in which the first analyses were carried out) to 2007 and by 5% in Catalonia between 2002 and 2005. The percentage in Catalonia is lower because the only available data come from the first years of the analyses, when the cultivation of GM maize was not as widespread as it is today.

13 . Austria Continues to Resist GM Products

http://www.coextra.eu/country_reports/news1202_en.html

On 7th May, 2008, the EU Commission lifted the import ban on GM maize lines MON810 and T25. However, the cultivation of GMO and the utilisation of genetically modified products cannot be anticipated in Austria at present. The Austrian Minister of Health, Andrea Kdolsky, has spoken of a voluntary agreement among the larger supermarket chains not to offer GMO-derived food products. The Minister also referred to a refusal of the animal feed industry to use MON810 and T25.

Since June 1999, Austria had prohibited the import, processing and cultivation of the lines MON810 and T25 from the Monsanto and Bayer companies and justified this decision with reasons of health protection. Since then, the Commission has decided that the import and processing of both lines must be permitted and, in case this does not occur, has raised the possibility of legal consequences. The Commission responded thereby to concerns of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which demands that scientifically unfounded trade barriers to genetically modified products in the European Union be lifted. Addressing the Commission, scientists have attested to the safety of both maize types for human beings and the environment. [???

The Austrian Minister of Health, Andrea Kdolsky, announced the formation of a research advisory council to assay "Risk Research and Use-of-Potential Analysis in Green Gene Technology". The minister emphasised that the council is expected to provide "qualitatively valuable arguments" with regard to future approval processes, "in order to effect prohibition throughout Europe".

14. All Are Watching Poland!

<http://www.grain.org/seedling/?id=558>

Poland is the only country in the EU that has imposed an outright ban on GMOs. In 2004 the ICPPC began to lobby local authorities to declare their regions "GMO-free". They argued that such a ban would help trade and tourism. One by one the 16 provinces not only agreed to a local GMO ban but lobbied the central government to have the ban turned into a national law. Rather to the amazement of the activists, the then Prime Minister, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, agreed. In April 2006 the Polish parliament adopted a law on seeds and plant protection that introduced a total ban on both the trade in, and cultivation of, GMO seeds on Polish territory.

But the ban is under threat. On 31 January 2008 European Union regulators began proceedings against Poland at Europe's highest court, the European Court of Justice, alleging that the ban had "no scientific justification". If the court rules against Poland, the country will face a hefty fine. At the same time, Monsanto, which was reportedly caught off guard by the Polish decision, is lobbying hard to get the ban lifted. "Every week or so a delegation arrives from the US authorities or from Monsanto", says Jadwiga Lopata. "The pressure is huge. The current Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, is beginning to wobble. And we see Poland's stance as crucial. If Poland gives in the corporations will have a much better chance of getting GMOs accepted throughout the EU."

15. New Remedy against GMOs!! -Greenpeace- Romania goes sarcastic !!

<http://db.zs-intern.de/uploads/1214212765-AntoCropRemedy.pdf>

Greenpeace offers the scientists 'AntiCorp' remedy against corporate power and GMOs*

On the occasion of a GMO promotion organized at the US Embassy, Greenpeace activists offered 'AntiCorp' pills as a remedy against corporate power and GMOs to the participants from the Romanian Parliament, Government and the Biosafety Commission.

"It's already obvious that the GMO industry is in crisis. After they unsuccessfully resorted to threats, they mobilized the big land agents league, politicians and researchers with GMO affinity, and after they [took them on a trip to] Brazil and Spain, today they try to glue the last responsible people in Romania that can save the country from GMOs. We offer special pills called Anticorp to save them from brainwashing," said Gabriel Paun of Greenpeace Romania.

AntiCorp is an urgent remedy for the members of the Biosafety Commission and other decision makers affected by 'Bacillus Biotechnologicus'. This renders them heavily influenced by agro-chemical companies when it comes to approvals of GMOs. In cases of scientific uncertainty AntiCorp also provides a strong stimulus to the affected people's minds.

It provides instant recall of the Precautionary Principle, which stresses the importance of protecting human health and the environment. AntiCorp is recommended in times of outbreak of corporate lobbying viruses. These highly dangerous infections often cause delusions where 'Commission Members' believe that protecting the interests of transnational corporations means progress for Romania.

The virus causes mental blurriness, loss of common sense and moral values. It leads to intolerance against preserving the earth's ecosystems and biodiversity and can generate death to democracy, nature, and food as we know it.

The virus is also known to make the 'Commission Members' act against farmers, consumers, independent scientists and the environment. With AntiCorp, you can (1) prevent Monsanto's (2) attack and help protect Biodiversity, Health, and Food Sovereignty from corporate control by biotech companies.

The agrochemical companies insist that GMOs are a safe tool, sustainable and economically important to fight the food crisis and world hunger. This statement is false.

In reality, GE will not help reduce soaring food prices or solve poverty, a fact that is recognised by over 400 of the world's leading agronomists at the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). GE is an expensive and risky option for farmers and puts the world's natural biodiversity at risk of contamination in an unforeseeable and uncontrolled way.

'The solution to the current food crisis is not genetically engineered crops or chemicals. Instead, we need to resort to modern ecological farming methods that bring higher yields and a more just distribution system. We also need an end to the developed world's over-consumption of meat that puts so many lives at risk. Biofuels should only be used if they meet strict sustainability criteria and if they do not compete with food production.'

Greenpeace urges the 12 members of the Biosafety Commission to be confident in using AntiCorp every time they present contamination symptoms after being in contact with the agrochemical industry and to encourage themselves to ban cultivation of GM maize.

This monthly bulletin is brought out by South Against Genetic Engineering (SAGE), a coalition of civil society activists, farmers, scientists, academicians, and consumer groups of four Southern States of India, viz., Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. SAGE has been waging a concerted battle against genetic engineering through a series of activities that involve public protests, media actions, seminars, consultations and publication of a series of educational materials.