

Dangers of Genetically Modified Crops: The Destabilization of Agriculture. Health Hazards

By [Friends of the Earth International](#)

Global Research, February 22, 2011

22 February 2011

Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#)

Friends of the Earth International

PRESS RELEASE

Embargo: 00.01 AM, Tuesday 22nd February 2011

Cracks widen in biotech industry myths

AMSTERDAM / BRUSSELS / MONTEVIDEO / BENIN CITY, 22 February 2011 – Governments are being forced to protect farmers and citizens from genetically modified crops (GM crops) to combat biotech corporations' stranglehold over farmers, and health scares from escalating pesticide use, according to a new report by Friends of the Earth International. [1]

On the eve of the release of industry-sponsored figures on the adoption of GM crops globally, the research highlights how even pro-GM governments in South America and the United States have been forced to take steps to mitigate the negative impacts of GM crops on farmers, citizens and the environment. [2]

In South America, the Brazilian Government has launched a GM-free soy programme to help farmers access non-GM soy seeds. In Argentina new research has exposed that the herbicide Glyphosate, used on the majority of GM crops grown worldwide, could have severe negative impacts on human health. [3] This has led to bans on spraying of the herbicide near people's homes. In Uruguay, local areas are declaring themselves GM-free.

Friends of the Earth International Food Sovereignty coordinator Martin Drago said,

"Farmers and citizens in South America are bearing the burden of ten years of GM crops with widespread health disasters and rising costs. The myths on which the biotech industry is built are crumbling.

The havoc wreaked across South America shows that this technology is not compatible with sustainable farming. It is a wake up call for the rest of the world to move towards more ecological methods of farming."

Widespread resistance to GM crops in the developing world and Europe means that they are only planted on a large scale in a handful of countries and that over 97% of global agricultural land is GM-free.

Friends of the Earth Europe Campaigner Mute Schimpf said:

“The widespread opposition to genetically modified crops and foods in Europe continues to rise because consumers and farmers can see that they offer no added value and instead create environmental and health risks.

GM crops will hinder, not help the challenge of ensuring we can feed our global population with safe and healthy food.”

Friends of the Earth International’s report “Who Benefits from GM crops? An industry built on myths” 2011 also finds that:

* A new generation of GM crops designed to promote the use of pesticides Dicamba and 2,4 D, are set for release in the United States. GM companies are promoting these as a solution to the failure of existing GM crops to control weeds and reduce pesticide use.

* Biotech companies, aided by the United States Government, are now looking to new markets in Africa in an attempt to salvage profits. The Gates foundation, which funds billions of dollars worth of agriculture projects in Africa, has bought shares in Monsanto, giving the Gates foundation a direct interest in maximising the profits of Monsanto over protecting the interests of small holders in Africa.

* GM crops continue to collapse in Europe. Less than 0.06 percents of European fields are planted with GM crops. Seven EU countries have banned Monsanto’s GM maize because of growing evidence of its negative environmental impacts. Three countries banned BASF’s GM potato due to health concerns immediately after its authorisation in spring 2010, and for the first time five member states have sued the European Commission over the authorisation of a GM crop.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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NOTES

[1] See Who Benefits from GM crops: the industry built on myths. <http://www.foei.org/en/who-benefits-from-gm-crops-2011/view>

[2] See also Friends of the Earth International 2010 “Who Benefits from GM crops: the great climate change swindle” <http://www.foei.org/en/resources/publications/pdfs/2010/who-benefits-from-gm-crops-2010>

[3] Paganelli, A et al. Glyphosate-Based Herbicides Produce Teratogenic Effects on Vertebrates by Impairing Retinoic Acid Signaling, Chem. Res. Toxicol., 2010, 23 (10), pp 1586-1595, <http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/tx1001749>

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