

# GMO Agribusiness in India: Grassroots Action against Monsanto, Cargill, Sygenta

Grassroots Activism Builds Wall Against Western Imperialism

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In the Times of India article, "[Farmers' groups give wish list to parties](#)," it states:

More than 100 farmers' organisations from about 14 states on Thursday presented a charter of demands to political parties for their considering while preparing the manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections.

The groups demanded guarantee of minimum income for farm households, ecologically sustainable farming, shift to organic farming and control of rural communities over agricultural resources, including land, water, forests and seeds. They also demanded that open-air release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the garb of field trials be stopped.

Regarding the disturbing trend of suicides sweeping across India's agricultural sector, the report states:

Citing census data, farmers' representatives said on an average, one farmer commits suicide every half an hour. Everyday, hundreds of farmers are quitting agriculture.

"The average monthly income of an overwhelming majority of Indian farmers is far less than what their average monthly expenditure is, making it difficult for most farm households to make their ends meet," said Kavita Kuruganti, convenor for Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture.

Clearly, the agricultural sector of India is failing, and it is not because it has not resigned itself to the devices and designs of foreign big-agri corporations, but precisely because it already has. In rebuttal to the growing backlash against corporations like Monsanto, Western media outlets have proposed that the farmers are wrong about why they claim they are killing themselves, and suggests instead it is both neither as serious as portrayed, and certainly not the result of big-agri's role in monopolizing India's agricultural sector.

The National Post, in its article, "[The myth of India's 'GM genocide': Genetically modified cotton blamed for wave of farmer suicides](#)," admits that:

A 2011 report published by the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHRGJ) claimed the sale of expensive genetically modified seeds to rural Indian farmers was a key factor

contributing to the growing suicide crisis.

“Multinational agribusiness corporations took advantage of India’s new market globalization ... by aggressively promoting the introduction of genetically modified seeds in Indian agriculture,” said the report.

But then counters by claiming:

But in 2008, the International Food Policy Research Institute, an alliance of 64 governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations that aims to end hunger in the developing world, reached an entirely different conclusion.

“It is not only inaccurate, but simply wrong to blame the use of Bt cotton as the primary cause of farmer suicides in India,” said the report, stating that the introduction of Bt cotton in India had actually been effective in producing higher yields and decreasing pesticide usage by nearly 40%.

The credibility and objectivity of the “International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPR),” particularly in regards to the use of Bt cotton in India, is compromised by the fact that its **donors list** is dominated by organizations of which Monsanto and other GMO purveyors fund directly.

For example, the “Better Cotton Initiative” which funds the IFPR **is in turn backed by big-agri giant Cargill**. Another IFPR donor is **Crop Life International, which in turn is funded by** BASF, Bayer, Dow AgroSciences, DuPont, Monsanto, Syngenta, and others. The laundering of big-agri cash and support through proxy organizations to conceal their involvement only further raises suspicion regarding the integrity and veracity of the IFPR’s contradictory report – a report that just so happens to define reality in terms that suits big business.

And of course, the National Post itself appears compromised, with its article parroting, almost verbatim, the official rebuttal posted on Monsanto’s official website regarding Bt cotton. Offered up in a post titled, **“Is Bt or GMO Cotton the Reason for Indian Farmer Suicides,”** Monsanto also claims “multiple societal issues are contributing to an unacceptably frequent occurrence of farmer suicides in India,” just as the National Post does – and to no one’s surprise, references the very report the recipient of Monsanto’s laundered funding published.

And while big-agri attempts to deflect attention away from the impact of genetically modified crops, the big-agri chemical racket even without the use of GMO has resulted in the ruination of farmers nationwide not just in India, **but in nearby Thailand as well**. Were big-agri’s miracle cures as good as they claim, farmers worldwide would be enjoying unprecedented, undeniable prosperity, rather than constantly living upon a razor’s edge, and more often than not falling into the abyss all together.

### **India’s Grassroots are Fighting Back**

The above mentioned farmers’ wishlist is just one of many direct actions being pursued by grassroots activists across India. The growing backlash against big-agri is what necessitates the elaborate and expensive deceptions Monsanto and others in big-agri have found themselves increasingly dependent on for increasingly tenuous results.

Events like New Delhi’s “National Seeds Festival” raise awareness of the already existent biodiversity found across India and facilitate networking between organic farmers. The Hindu reported in its article, **“Sovereign seeds showcase unique biodiversity,”** that:

The farmers announced the formation of a National Seed Savers Forum to strengthen conservation and breeding. They plan to impress upon the government the need to promote diversity conservation and prevent bio-piracy and corporate monopolisation.

It also added:

Dr. Deb said indigenous farmers have paddy varieties that are rich in Vitamin B, but the government ignores them and goes for the GM Golden rice variety being developed by Monsanto. He lamented that nutritious foods, crops and millets are being allowed to disappear.

“We have displayed the richness of India’s biodiversity and seed sovereignty here in the city so that the urban class can appreciate what we have and understand what we stand to lose,” said Kavitha Kuruganti of the Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture. “Millets,” she said, “were wiped out because the government is promoting cereals.”

Like elsewhere, organic farmers realize that the government has been, and most likely always will be bent to the will of both domestic and foreign corporate-financier special interests. Getting organized and engaging in increasing degrees of direct action is the only way to influence public perception and protect both their own livelihoods as well as the genetic heritage of their nation’s agricultural resources.

### **Big-Agri’s Weak, Predictable Counterstrokes**

India’s growing anti-big-agri grassroots movement have produced anti-GMO celebrity Vandana Shiva, whose popularity and impact has grown to such a degree internationally, that Wall Street and London’s corporate-financier funded policy think tanks have dedicated entire columns in Western newspapers denouncing her.

Food security hero Vandana Shiva.

GMO peddler Jon Entine of the corporate-funded Neo-Con American Enterprise Institute (AEI) penned “**Vandana Shiva, Anti-GMO Celebrity: ‘Eco Goddess’ Or Dangerous Fabulist?**” in Forbes, claiming:

Vandana Shiva is a prominent Indian-born environmentalist who has emerged as one of the world’s most prominent critics of conventional agriculture and biotechnology. In the most recent sign of her iconic status, earlier this month, Beloit College in Wisconsin conferred on her a prestigious honor as the Weissberg Chair in International Studies, calling her a “one-woman movement for peace, sustainability and social justice.”

Whether that accurately describes Shiva is debatable—there appears to be a sizable gap between her self-representations and the subjects she claims to be an expert on. However her status as a celebrity activist is not in question. Shiva’s unbridled opposition to GMOs has made her a favorite in liberal and environmental circles. She hopscoches the globe, making frequent appearances at anti-GMO rallies, on college campuses and on lecture tours...

Entine then engages in a rambling, irrelevant attack on Vandana Shiva before regurgitating big-agri’s tired and untrue defense of their demonstrably destructive global practices. While Entine damns Shiva for criticizing GMO and the multinational corporations pushing them, he offers no alternative explanation as to why farmers and food security remain in such a precarious state, or why a large and growing movement is forming against him and his corporate-financier backers.

The use of ineffective, transparently compromised propagandists like Jon Entine, is a sign of weakness from the West's big-agri racket. The success of Vandana Shiva and the growing movement she is a part of in India gives hope to millions around the world trapped under the boot of multinational corporations like Monsanto, Syngenta, Dow, DuPont, Bayer, and Cargill.

The answer is not simply protesting and demanding from "elected officials" the end of abuses and exploitation by these corporations, but to fill the strategic space in which they operate with pragmatic solutions, alternative paradigms, networks, economic models, market places, and public perception driven by grassroots. Once these are in place, there will be no more room for foreign interests to operate. The successes of India's organic anti-GMO movement will then serve as a template for other movements to follow - including those seeking justice and protection from big-pharma and big-energy. India's successes, like those demonstrated elsewhere around the globe, serve as inspiration for others beyond India's borders.

It was in India where Mahatma Gandhi challenged the might of the British Empire, not with armed resistance or deadly protests in the streets, but by short-circuiting the paradigm of dependence imposed upon India by its foreign occupiers. The echo of his famous marches to the sea where his followers produced their own salt in defiance of British taxes and regulations can be heard across the organic food movement which seeks independence from foreign multinationals in the development of India's food security.

Just as the British Empire had done to India economically and sociopolitically, big-agri and other multinational corporate rackets are attempting to impose similar models of servile dependence via patented, monopolized biotechnology. Just as the British used any and every excuse imaginable to defend its colonial practices and undermine the champions of freedom and justice that opposed them, Western multinationals are doing likewise today, as seen in the toxic columns penned by the likes of Jon Entine of the American Enterprise Institute and the dishonest assessments published in the National Post.

And just like the British Empire was fighting an ultimately futile battle against a people who had awoken and who would never again sleep in the colonial dreamworld they had constructed, the people of India today are pushing out multinationals and building a wall against their return, one

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