

India: Selling Out To Monsanto. GMOs and the Bigger Picture

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On 15 August, India will mark its 67th anniversary of independence from Britain. It may seem strange to some that a nation would publicly celebrate its independence while at the same time it less publicly cedes it to outsiders. The gleaming façade of flags and fly-pasts will belie the fact that national security and independence do not depend on military might and patriotic speeches. Eye-catching celebrations will take place in Delhi and much of the media will mouth platitudes about the strength of the nation and its independence. The reality is, however, an ongoing, concerted attempt to undermine and destroy the very foundation and security of the country.

The bedrock of any society is its agriculture. Without food there can be no life. Without food security, there can be no genuine independence. A recent report by the organisation GRAIN revealed that small farms produce most of the world's food and are more productively efficient than large farms [1]. Facilitated by an appropriate policy framework, small farmers could easily feed the global population. But small farmers are currently squeezed onto less than a quarter of the world's farmland and the world is fast losing farms and farmers through the concentration of land into the hands big agribusiness and the rich and powerful. If nothing is done to reverse this trend, the world will lose its capacity to feed itself.

By definition, peasant agriculture prioritises food production for local and national markets as well as for farmers' own families. Corporations take over scarce fertile land and prioritise non-food commodities or export crops for profit and markets far away that cater for the needs of the affluent. This process impoverishes local communities and brings about food insecurity. GRAIN concludes that the concentration of fertile agricultural land in fewer and fewer hands is directly related to the increasing number of people going hungry every day.

The Oakland Institute in the US recently stated that the first years of the 21st century will be remembered for a global land rush of nearly unprecedented scale [2]. An estimated 500 million acres, an area eight times the size of Britain, was reported bought or leased across the developing world between 2000 and 2011, often at the expense of local food security and land rights. This trend could eventually result in the permanent shift of farm ownership from family businesses to institutional investors and other consolidated corporate operations.

Monsanto in India

In India, small farms account for 92 percent of farms and occupy around 40 percent of all agricultural land. They form the bedrock of food production. However, there is a concerted effort to remove farmers from the land. Hundreds of thousands of farmers have taken their

lives since 1997 and many more are experiencing economic distress or have left farming as a result of debt, a shift to (GM) cash crops and economic liberalisation [3].

Monsanto already controls the cotton industry in India and is increasingly shaping agri-policy and the knowledge paradigm by funding agricultural research in public universities and institutes. Its practices and colonisation of institutions have led to it being called the 'contemporary East India Company' [4], and regulatory bodies are now severely compromised and riddled with conflicts of interest where decision-making over GMOs are concerned [5].

In the meantime, Monsanto and the GM biotech sector forward the myth that GM food is necessary to feed the world's burgeoning population. They are not. Aside from the review by GRAIN, the World Bank-funded International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge and Science for Development Report stated that smallholder, traditional farming (not GMOs) can deliver food security in low-income countries through sustainable agri-ecological systems [5].

The Standing Committee on Agriculture in Parliament unequivocally concluded that GM seeds and foods are dangerous to human, animal and environmental health and directed the former Government of Manmohan Singh to ban GMOs [6]. Despite such evidence and the recommendations to put a hold on open field GM trials by the Supreme Court-appointed Technical Expert Committee, the push is on within official circles to give such trials the green light.

Monsanto cannot be trusted

The GM biotech sector cannot be trusted. As its largest player, Monsanto is responsible for knowingly damaging people's health and polluting the environment and is guilty of a catalogue of decades-long deceptive, duplicitous and criminal practices [7]. It has shown time and again its contempt for human life and the environment and that profit overrides any notion of service to the public, yet it continues to propagate the lie that it has humanity's best interests at heart because its so-called GMO 'frontier technology' can feed the hungry millions.

The sector attempts to control the 'science' around its products by carrying out inadequate, secretive studies of its own, placing restrictions on any independent research into its products and censoring findings that indicate the deleterious impacts of its products [8]. It has also faked data [9] and engages in attacking scientists who reach conclusions not to its liking [10,11]. It cannot demonstrate that yields are better, nutritional values are improved, health is not damaged or that harm to the environment does not occur with the adoption of GMOs. Independent studies and evidence, not inadequate industry funded or back ones, have indicated yields are often worse and herbicide use has increased [12,13,14], health is negatively impacted [15,16], soil is damaged [17] and biodiversity is undermined [18], among other things.

GRAIN found that around 56 percent of Russia's agricultural output comes from family farms which occupy less than 9 percent of arable land. Russia does not need or want GM crops, which the Russian Prime Minister has described as amounting to little more than a form of biological warfare weapon [19]. And here lies the real heart of the matter. Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once said that if you control oil you control nations, but if you control food you control people. GMOs are not needed to feed the world. Science cannot

justify their use. They are a weapon.

In India, there is a drive to remove small/family farms, which are capable of ensuring the nation's food security, and eventually replace them with larger biotech-controlled monoculture farms with GM crops for Western styled processed-food supermarkets and export [20]. It is no surprise that the likes of Syngenta, Monsanto and Walmart had a direct hand in drawing up the Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture, which was in turn linked to the US sanctioning the opening up of India's nuclear power sector.

Despite India not being a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, US corporations are now actively involved in helping India develop its civil nuclear capabilities. Payback appears to come in the form of handing over the control of India's agricultural land and food system to the US via that country's biotech companies.

GMOs and the bigger picture

Russia is correct to conflate bio-terror and GMOs. The oil-rich Rockefeller family set out to control global agriculture via the petrochemical-dependent 'green revolution'. The destruction of traditional farmer-controlled agriculture was actively supported by the US government and its Trojan horse agritech corporations under the agenda set out by Kissinger. GMOs now represent the ultimate stranglehold over food via 'terminator' seed technology, seed patenting and intellectual property rights.

Moreover, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Gates Foundation - which have teamed up with Monsanto in Africa - have long-standing concerns about overpopulation in 'third world' countries and how they could develop and threaten resources that the West has used to enrich itself with [21]. In fact, Monsanto now own the Epicyte gene, which causes sterility. What will be the 'final solution' for the likes of 600 million in India or millions in Africa or elsewhere who are to be removed from agriculture [22]? The eugenicists are knocking at the door.

Despite compliant politicians and officials in high places who seem hellbent on capitulating to Monsanto and the US, many recognise the dangers associated with GMOs and are working hard to resist their introduction. However, they are attacked and accused of slowing down growth because of their resistance to GMOs [23]. Certain activists and civil organisations are also accused of working against the national interest by colluding with foreign interests to undermine 'development'. The hypocrisy is blindingly obvious: the state itself has for a long time been colluding with foreign interests to undermine the basis of traditional agriculture.

The political backing for GMOs by the US State Department, the strategic position of the US GM biotech sector in international trade agreements and the push to get GMOs into India and to contaminate agriculture via open-field trials with the compliance of key officials and official bodies does not bode well. Independence is much more than military might, patriotic slogans and a self-congratulatory media-induced frenzy on a designated day each year. In terms of GMOs, Russia is aware of this. It is actively committed to putting the GMO genie back in the bottle [24]. Why isn't India?

"It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity... The

achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?... A new star rises, the star of freedom in the east, a new hope comes into being, a vision long cherished materialises. May the star never set and that hope never be betrayed!" Jawaharlal Nehru from his "tryst with destiny" speech at Parliament House in New Delhi in 1947.

Notes

- [1]<http://www.grain.org/article/entries/4929-hungry-for-land-small-farmers-feed-the-world-with-less-than-a-quarter-of-all-farmland>
- [2]http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/OI_Report_Down_on_the_Farm.pdf
- [3]<http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/new-evidence-of-suicide-epidemic-among-indias-marginalised-farmers>
- [4]<http://dissidentvoice.org/2009/07/monsanto-a-contemporary-east-india-company-and-corporate-knowledge-in-india/>
- [5]<http://www.countercurrents.org/rodrigues120813.htm>
- [6]<http://www.thepeoplesvoice.org/TPV3/Voices.php/2014/03/13/leaving-a-scorched-india?tempskin=basic>
- [7]<http://www.wakingtimes.com/2014/06/20/complete-history-monsanto-worlds-evil-corporation/>
- [8]<http://www.globalresearch.ca/gmo-scandal-the-long-term-effects-of-genetically-modified-food-on-humans/14570>
- [9]<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/Monsanto+'faked'+data+for+approvals+claims+its+ex-chief/1/83093.html>
- [10]<http://www.gmwatch.org/latest-listing/1-news-items/12715-seralini-vs-fellous-a-gmo-libel-case-over-independent-expertise-and-science>
- [11]<http://www.globalresearch.ca/gmo-researchers-attacked-evidence-denied-and-a-population-at-risk/5305324>
- [12]<http://naturalsociety.com/breaking-new-usda-report-proves-environmental-impact-gmo-questionable/>
- [13] <http://www.alternet.org/food/why-monsanto-wrong-about-gm-crop-promises>
- [14] <http://fieldquestions.com/2013/02/09/bt-cotton-is-failing-blame-the-farmers/>
- [15] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/potential-health-hazards-of-genetically-engineered-foods/8148>
- [16] <http://www.gmoseralini.org/republication-seralini-study-science-speaks/>
- [17] <http://www.psrast.org/soilecolart.htm>
- [18] <http://gmo-journal.com/2011/06/17/loss-of-biodiversity-and-genetically-modified-crops/>

[19] <http://bodhita.com/russia-labels-gmo-foods-as-biological-warfare-weapon/>

[20] <http://www.bhoomimagazine.org/article/cash-food-will-strike-very-foundation-economy>

[21] <http://farmwars.info/?p=11879>

[2 2]

<http://reimagining.cepa.lk/index.php/en/development-news/item/229-corporate-power-women-and-resistance-in-india-today-an-interview-with-arundhati-roy>

[2 3]

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/ngos-stance-on-development-projects-to-hit-growth-ib/article6105289.ece>

[24] <http://rt.com/op-edge/159948-gmo-food-russia-law/>

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