

“The Corporate Capture of Our Food Production”: No GMOs in the EU, No GMOs in Africa!

Debate in the European Parliament

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The European Parliament has had a great week, writes Molly Scott Cato MEP – for those who oppose GMOs in food and farming. MEPs voted on five occasions to say no to GMOs, and gave their support to agroecology as the only sustainable way to feed the world.

This week’s European Parliament plenary saw five different votes on GMOs. Altogether, they give a good idea of the Parliament’s opinion on GMOs – a resounding NO.

With corporations playing an increasing role in our food systems, Greens argue that [GMOs are simply a means to profit](#) from our plates, detrimental to smaller-scale farmers and thoroughly damaging to biodiversity.

Recently proposed mergers of big agrochemical multinationals give further cause for concern – Dow with Du Pont, Syngenta with ChemChina, perhaps even Bayer with Monsanto.

As a member of both the Agriculture and Economics Committees in the European Parliament, I am concerned about the corporate capture of our food production; endorsing monocultures, putting patents on life – and packaging it with a pesticide.

The problems of industrial agriculture will not be solved through GMOs or fancy technological tools, but by converting to agro-ecological approaches to farming. The EU should fund research on classical plant breeding adapted to these systems, rather than [pouring 67% of its agriculture research budget into biotechnology](#).

‘Old’ GMOs out of the door, but ‘new’ GMOs knocking?

A pro-agribusiness [report](#) on ‘technological solutions for sustainable agriculture’, initiated by Conservative MEP Anthea McIntyre, was heavily amended by MEPs who refused to open the door to untested, unlabelled GMOs in the EU.

As Green spokesperson for this report, I remain critical of its misguided ‘solutions,’ which push us further into input-intensive, industrial agriculture. Another [report by MEP Jan Huitema](#) on ‘innovation in farming’ faced similar rebuttals.

Over the last three years, the agroindustry has been arguing that their [new biotechnologies](#) (which they call ‘[new breeding techniques](#)’) don’t need to be controlled under the current GMO regulation. But the products of these techniques clearly [meet the definition](#) of ‘genetically modified organisms’, and carry similar and [additional](#) risks to those

posed by current GMOs (transgenesis).

Fortunately, keeping agriculture and not agribusiness in mind, MEPs intend to call a spade a spade – and voted against the attempts to sneak new GMOs past the regulators. This also sends the Commission a strong warning over its decision in April to [bow to US pressure](#) on the issue in the TTIP negotiations.

No to GMO imports! No GMOs in Africa!

Two objections to the authorisation for import of a GM carnation and a GM maize (Maize Bt11 × MIR162 × MIR604 × GA21) were voted through on Wednesday. These were the 5th and 6th objections submitted to the plenary since [December 2015](#), all initiated by the Greens/EFA.

Clearly, MEPs don't want GMOs imported into the EU – so it is only logical that they oppose their promotion elsewhere. Hence [their vote criticizing](#) the so-called 'New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa' ([NAFSN](#)).

This public-private partnership claims to leverage private investment in agriculture, to improve food security and nutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa. But NGOs have [repeatedly attacked this misconceived scheme](#) for fostering land grabbing, stopping farmers from saving and reproducing their own seeds, and also for forcing GMOs on African farmers.

An overwhelming number of MEPs voted in favour of a Green [report](#) critiquing this initiative this week, which included opposition to any promotion of GMOs in Africa with European taxpayers' money.

The draft report had prompted [accusations of neo-colonialism](#) from Monsanto – ironic, given that the industry has been exploiting the New Alliance in order to change African legal frameworks on land ownership, seeds and GMOs for their own benefit – facilitating the privatisation of land, water and seeds, and stripping African farmers of the right to save, sell, buy, exchange, plant and breed the seeds they have developed over millennia.

Which prompts the question: who are the real neo-colonialists?

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