

The Realities of GMO and Petro-chemical Agriculture: Allergies, Toxins, New Diseases.

The Deceptions and Falsehoods of the GMO Lobby: Acquiesce Or Europe Will Become “Museum of World Farming”

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British Environment Secretary Owen Paterson is a staunch supporter of the GMO sector. Despite mounting evidence pointing to the deleterious health, social, ecological and environmental impacts of GMOs, Paterson has a blind spot that lets him ignore reality and allows him to lend unconditional support to the biotech conglomerates, the very concerns that regard Europe as a massive potential cash cow from which their GM crops have till now mostly been barred or restricted.

Paterson recently told the Oxford Farming Conference that Europe is likely to become “the museum of world farming” because of its failure to embrace genetically modified crops. He went on to state that the longer Europe continues to close its doors to GM crops, the greater the risk that the rest of the world will bypass us altogether:

“Europe risks becoming the museum of world farming as innovative companies make decisions to invest and develop new technologies in other markets.”

Paterson said there was “compelling evidence” that GM crops could benefit farmers, consumers, the environment and the economy.

Nearly 50 countries around the world have either banned GM crop production outright, or have put in place extremely tight restrictions on the production and use of GM products. However, EU member states will soon vote on whether to allow cultivation of a variety of maize that has been made insect-resistant through genetic engineering. If licensed, it would be the first GM food crop authorised for planting by the EU in 15 years.

Paterson said any decisions must be based on scientific evidence, in contrast to “politically motivated” delays and blocks to GM crops in the past.

He stated:

“I will continue to make the case for a regime that allows fair market access for products once they have passed Europe’s rigorous, independent scientific assessment.”

Paterson has previously indicated that he wants to relax British regulations on the cultivation of GM crops, and has said they have “environmental benefits”.

Owen Paterson has a track record of lending blind support to the GM sector with his factually incorrect statements. In 2013, he called concerns over the use of GM foods “complete nonsense” in an attack on public concerns about GMOs (1):

“I’m very clear it (GM) would be a good thing... The trouble is all this stuff about Frankenstein foods and putting poisons in foods. There are real benefits, and what you’ve got to do is sell the real environmental benefits. Those benefits include a reduction in the use of pesticides because some GM crops are pest-resistant.”

Paterson also said that consumers were already unwittingly eating GM food on a regular basis, so concerns about human health are misplaced and based on “nonsense” and “humbug.”

In another 2013 speech, Paterson stated that “seven million children” had gone blind or died over the past 15 years because “every attempt” to introduce a GM-rice fortified with sight-saving vitamin A had “been thwarted.”

Owen Paterson vs the reality of GMOs and petro-chemical agriculture

Paterson talks emotive, simplistic sound-bite stuff about dead children that might play well to sections of a wider misinformed public. It conveniently overlooks broader, more complex issues related to global poverty, the international system of finance, the ‘structural adjustment’ of local systems of agriculture that have destroyed indigenous food production, world trade policies and the corporate hijack of much of global farming by the West for its agribusiness industry (2).

Paterson’s stance typifies how powerful interests (or their mouthpieces) distort reality when faced with a situation that curtails their interests and profits. It is in their view their opponents who are ideologically or politically motivated and who engage in emotive scare-mongering, while it is they, the immensely rich and politically well connected, who have humanity’s interests at heart and are driven by science and altruism.

If the likes of Paterson are all too dismissive of those anti-GM/anti-MNC “disgusting enemies of the poor,” “ignoramus” and “scientific jokers” (eg, Professor Seralni in France and Pushpa Bhargava in India) who supposedly engage in “lies,” “nonsense” and “deceit” to counter scientific facts and the “safe frontier technology” of GMOs (3), perhaps they might be inclined to pay more heed to millionaire MP Zac Goldsmith, who is a member of the Conservative Party to which Paterson also belongs.

Hardly a dyed in the wool, anti-MNC leftie, Goldsmith last year claimed that Paterson is a puppet of the biotech industry and does not understand the dangers genetically modified crops pose to the ecosystem.

Speaking to The Independent newspaper on 3 July 2013, Goldsmith declared:

“He’s swallowed the industry line hook, line and sinker without talking to anyone with a different view. When designing policy that’s a dangerous thing, and I’m concerned big business is framing the debate for the government... The story so far suggests that GM is predominantly about the industry getting greater control over the food chain, rather than alleviating poverty or

environmental concerns.” (4)

Paterson displays blatant disregard for the political hijack of food and agriculture and its regulatory bodies by powerful agribusiness and the consequent lax regulations governing its activities. His stance indicates he is probably part of that very problem. His claim about the reduced levels of pesticides is but one instance of his ignorance. This can be placed alongside his range of ignorance on the actual documented lack of agricultural benefits derived from GMOs and their deleterious health impacts (5,6,7,8,9).

His outbursts persist regardless of the destruction of indigenous, traditional patterns of agriculture whose productivity is often far better than any petro-chemical based and/or GMO-based 'green revolution'. If he wants to talk about "museums" then he may like to look at historical evidence pertaining to traditional farming in India and its much better levels of productivity compared with modern methods (9).

It is such a travesty that a senior politician, a 'public servant', seems content to become part of the problem by kowtowing to the massive well-documented GMO industry pressures and its global PR machine, which receives full and active support from the US State Department (10,11).

And whether the public wanted them or not in the US, GM crops are prevalent there, despite there having been significant concern from scientists at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) prior to the FDA allowing GM products into the food chain. The concerns of the scientists were ignored, and by the time the public became aware, the GM products were firmly embedded into the US food production chain (12).

FDA scientists had continually warned regulators that GM crops could create unpredictable and hard to detect side effects, including allergies, toxin production, nutritional problems, and new diseases. They recommended that long-term studies were needed to fully assess the effect of GM foods on other crops, the ecosystem, and animal and human health, but these warnings were ignored.

William F Engdahl has written on this and both he and the watchdog body Corporate European Observatory have raised serious concerns about deep-seated conflicts of interests within the European Food Safety Agency as well pertaining to the biotech sector and major food conglomerates (13,14).

As the GM food sector continues to push at India's door, we should look to what the GM cotton sector has already 'achieved' there. The continued use of GM modified cotton has reduced yields, and the cotton bollworm has developed a resistance to the GM crops which contain the Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) toxin (15). This is resulting in an ever increasing barrage of profitable 'innovations' from the biotech sector. 'Innovations' and 'R&D' being trendy terms for attempting to keep on top of the damage being done to agriculture as each new 'frontier' product fails the farmer. More destined to fail technology replaces the older destined to fail products under the banner of 'cutting edge' developments (16).

The original 'green revolution' is now displaying its devastating long-term health and environmental impacts in Punjab (17). What price its potential 'second coming' in the form of GM food crops some years down the line? To answer that question, all we need to do is look elsewhere at the emerging outcomes referenced elsewhere in this article, not least five paragraphs further down through a recent article by Helen Paul on the impacts of GMOs in

the Americas.

Paterson's claims that the use of GM crops reduce the use of pesticides do not hold up. Research by a Washington State University team found that the use of herbicides and insecticides has increased dramatically since GM crops were introduced in the US in 1996 (18). And researchers at the University of Arizona found that multi-toxin GM crops (which are the most technologically advanced crops in use) quickly lose their ability to fend off pests, which is likely to lead to a complete failure of the GMO (19).

Moreover, there has been no proper research or monitoring by the companies producing GM crops of the effects on humans consuming products made with GM crops. Scientists like Dr Arpad Pusztai in the UK and Professor Seralini in France, who have published findings critical of GM crops and food, suffered a wave attacks designed to undermine their work (or careers) by supporters of the technology.

Minister Patterson's pro-GM attitudes come as little surprise, though. The cosy relationship between governments and the biotech companies is well known, especially in the US (20), where there has been legislation passed that allows biotech companies to be totally free of any legal ramifications if their products cause harm (21).

Perhaps Owen Paterson should take heed of mounting concerns about the terrible health impacts of glyphosate and how GMOs drive the sales of this weedkiller and the deleterious impacts of GMOs on plants and humans (22). He could also take note at the provincial government of Chaco province in Argentina issuance of a report on health statistics from the town La Leonesa, which showed that from 2000 to 2009, following the expansion of genetically-modified soy and rice crops in the region (and the use of glyphosate), the childhood cancer rate tripled in La Leonesa and the rate of birth defects increased nearly fourfold over the entire province (23).

Or maybe he should read Helen Paul's recent piece in *The Ecologist* (24). She discusses the unfolding social, health, environmental and ecological disasters of GM agriculture/petrochemical agriculture on a country by country basis in the Americas and argues that a powerful message should be sent to the EU (and Paterson) that GMOs are not wanted there and that Europe should stop buying and importing the products of GM-driven genocide and ecocide in the Americas. She reveals how repression and displacement, often violent, of remaining rural populations, illness, falling local food production have all featured in this picture. Yet, she argues, we currently face a desperate, almost farcical push for GM crops in the UK and Europe, characterised by hyperbolic and inaccurate claims of which the frequent claims by Paterson no doubt typify.

Far from being a "museum of world farming" as Paterson, likes to claim, Europe could show the way to a rich and varied GM free, organic-based agriculture that provides nutritious, healthy food and jobs. At the same time, Paul argues, we should address the profound degradation of soils and accelerating biodiversity loss, caused to a great extent by the industrial model of agriculture to which genetically engineered crops belong.

Maybe politicians such as Owen Paterson are (unwittingly) content to be fodder for the wider political and economic that GMOs (and big dam, debt-inducing, dollar supporting, oil-dependent chemical agriculture) are tied to. It's an agenda encompassing an integrated strategy that involves the (near) monopoly ownership and control and ultimate weaponisation of all water, seeds, food and food retail, land and energy, which in turn both

fuels and is fuelled by militarism, conflict, debt and dependency (25,26,27,28). Across the planet, we see this agenda being played out via violent conflict, 'free' trade agreements (29,30) and the shaping of political agendas (31).

Notes

- 1) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9733589/Food-minister-Owen-Paterson-backs-GM-crops.html>
- 2) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/vandana-shiva/from-seeds-of-suicide-to_b_192419.html
- 3) <http://www.countercurrents.org/todhunter301212.htm>
- 3) <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=573>
- 4) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/tory-mp-says-progm-environment-secretary-owen-paterson-is-industry-puppet-8686133.html>
- 5) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJ9vAULNFzc>
- 6) <http://www.greenmedinfo.com/blog/new-study-confirms-wheat-autism-link-0>
- 7) <http://www.greenmedinfo.com/blog/it-time-acknowledge-roundup-herbicide-contraceptive>
- 8) <http://www.responsibletechnology.org/gmo-dangers>
- 9) <http://vidarbhatimes.blogspot.co.uk/2012/11/maharashtra-reports-btcotton-failure-in.html?m=1>
- 9) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/india-genetically-modified-seeds-agricultural-productivity-and-political-fraud/5328227>
- 10) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/may/15/diplomatic-cables-gm-lobbying-us>
- 11) http://documents.foodandwaterwatch.org/doc/Biotech_Report_US.pdf
- 12) <http://www.nongmoreport.com/articles/october2011/FDAignorescientistswarningsGMfoods.php>
- 13) <http://www.shiftfrequency.com/f-william-engdahl-cancer-of-corruption-seeds-of-destruction-the-monsanto-gmo-whitewash/>
- 14) <http://corporateeurope.org/efsa/2013/10/unhappy-meal-european-food-safety-authoritys-independence-problem>
- 15) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/harvest-of-hypocrisy-farmers-being-blamed-for-gmo-crop-failures/5322807>
- 16) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/gmo-agribusiness-and-the-destructive-nature-of-global-capitalism/5323232>

- 17) <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/309654/punjab-transformation-food-bowl-cancer.html>
- 18) <http://www.motherjones.com/tom-philpott/2012/10/how-gmos-ramped-us-pesticide-use>
- 19) http://www.naturalnews.com/040120_gm_crops_monsanto_chemical_resistance.html
- 20) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/monsanto-controls-both-the-white-house-and-the-us-congress/5336422>
- 21) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/monsanto-protection-act-signed-by-obama-gmo-bill-written-by-monsanto-signed-into-law/5329388>
- 22) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/monsanto-roundup-glyphosate-weedkiller-in-our-food-and-water/5339244>
- 23) <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-147561-2010-06-14.html>
- 24) http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/2267255/gm_crops_are_driving_genocide_and_ecocide_keep_them_out_of_the_eu.html
- 25) <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?280234>
- 26) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/sowing-the-seeds-of-famine-in-ethiopia/366>
- 27) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-eu-india-free-trade-agreement-india-up-for-sale-to-western-corporate-capital/5332214>
- 28) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/genetic-engineering-and-the-gmo-industry-corporate-hijacking-of-food-and-agriculture/5317339>
- 29) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-eu-free-trade-agreement-a-corporate-stitch-up-by-any-other-name/5339789>
- 30) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-eu-free-trade-agreement-a-corporate-stitch-up-by-any-other-name/5339789>
- 31) <http://www.countercurrents.org/todhunter100213.htm>

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