

PRESS RELEASE NO. 2

Inauguration of “Transgenic contamination of maize: crime against humanity?”

First public hearing to prepare the presentation of the GM Maize case before international courts

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La Via Campesina North America Region

Red en Defensa del Maíz (Network in Defense of Maize, Mexico)

Asamblea Nacional de Afectados Ambientales (Assembly of People Displaced by Environmental Impacts, Mexico)

Guadalajara, March 2, 2010. Faced with the international “technical” conference of the FAO in Guadalajara, “Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries,” which is little more than just the promotion of GM crops - today we inaugurated the “First public hearing to prepare the presentation of the GM Maize case before international courts,” organized by La Via Campesina North America Region, Red en Defensa del Maíz (Network in Defense of Maize, Mexico), and Asamblea Nacional de Afectados Ambientales (Assembly of People Displaced by Environmental Impacts, Mexico), with the participation of 276 people, mostly members and leaders of peasant, family farm, and indigenous peoples’ organizations from 19 Mexican states, the USA, and Canada.

The hearing was inaugurated by Alberto Gómez Flores of La Via Campesina, Eutimio Díaz of the Wixarika People (in the name of the Network for the Defense of Maize), and Octavio Rosas of the Asamblea Nacional de Afectados Ambientales. Alberto Gómez said that the peasant and indigenous people of Mexico feel it is an act of aggression for the FAO to come here to promote GMOs, called the GM contamination of maize “a crime against humanity.” He was followed by Pat Mooney of the ETC Group (Canada), who denounced that “GMO contaminated and transnational corporations (TNCs) have now contaminated the FAO and the UN, which is another crime against humanity.” He noted that “what is a crisis for people - hunger - is cynically seen by TNCs as an opportunity, to push new products, like GM crops.”

Camila Montecinos of GRAIN in Chile sent her regrets that the terrible recent earthquake in her country made it impossible for her to travel. But in her document, which was read to the audience, she stated that “GMO contamination is an intentional strategy by TNCs to open new markets for their seeds,” using the argument that once local crops are already contaminated, there is no longer any reason to maintain bans on legal GMO plantings. George Naylor, ex-president of the National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) in the USA, told an anecdote from his neighbors, who found that their cows refuse to eat GM maize, and he argued that this exposes the lie by industry when they claim there are no negative health effects of GMOs.

Ernesto Ladrón de Guevara of UNORCA, reviewed the history of neoliberal laws in Mexico, on seeds, biosafety, etc., and noted that they have given “poor or negative results.” Similarly, attorney Evangelina Robles of the Coas Collective, explain how, with the signing of NAFTA, a process of modifying nationals was initiated in Mexico, with the objective of “disarticulating and privatizing of the elements of the territories of indigenous and peasant peoples; the land, air, forests, water,

biodiversity, etc.," paving the way for GMOs, among other evil things.

The afternoon saw testimonies and indigenous, peasant and family farmers. A Mixtec man and women from Oaxaca told how their native maize varieties had been contaminated with as many as three different transgenes, but also that they have been developing local techniques for decontamination, such as pulling up deformed plants, or cutting off their tassels. Eutimio Díaz, of the Wixarika people in Jalisco, described how, "for indigenous people, maize is first, maize is ours, and we are part of her." He noted that his communities have made a firm decision to defend their maize, and therefore, "we will not accept any seeds from the government, because we don't know what they are, or for what real purpose they are giving them to us." Sergio Bautista, of the Nahuatl people in the Huasteca region of Hidalgo, agreed, stating that, "we will not plant any seed from SAGARPA (the Ministry of Agriculture)." He also said that "maize is very sacred to us, it is our life."

Ineke Booy, of the National Farmers Union of Canada (NFU), explained how, when they converted their farm to organic, "we thought we had defeated the pesticide TNCs, but now we find we are once more under attack, this time by GMOs." Jan Slomp, from the same organization, told the story of new laws in Canada that prohibit the sale or planting of seed varieties not on an official approved list, and how corrupted officials remove non-GMO varieties from that list. In the case of canola, he said that "the farmer is left with just two options: go GMO, or stop planting canola." Amalia Salas, of Xochimilco in Mexico City, said that "the Mother Earth is very very angry with us, because we are not taking care of her." And that, "unless we defend our maize from GMOs, our ancestors will also be angry with us." Olegario Carillo, of UNORCA, denounced the "coordination action by TNCs and a government that has sold out," that has brought us to the lamentable present situation of GMO contamination in Mexico. He reaffirmed the commitment of UNORCA to the struggle to defend maize.

**We reject the promotion of GMOs by the FAO.
No to GM maize! Monsanto Out!
Food Sovereignty Now!**

2 March 2010, Guadalajara, Mexico

Delegation (Mexico, United States, Canada) of La Via Campesina, North America Region, upon the occasion of the FAO Conference on Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries

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