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FAO Promotes Gmos, Slap In The Face Of Those Who Defend Food Sovereignty

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PRESS RELEASE

FAO promotes GMOs as solution for the world hunger problem, a slap in the face of those who defend food sovereignty.

Is the FAO being taken over by Monsanto, Syngenta and other corporate interests?

The FAO has released its high profile annual report that turns out to be blunt propaganda for the multinationals like Monsanto and Syngenta who are imposing GMOs against the will of peasants and consumers. The report advocates the false argument that genetic engineering can play a crucial role in resolving the problem of world hunger.

By publishing this report FAO has sold itself out to Monsanto (which controls approximately 90% of the surface planted with GMO crops world-wide), Syngenta (the transnational that is currently forcing Bt-maize on the market), other GMO companies, and the interests of certain governments of industrialized countries. This report does not take into account in any way the concerns and proposals of the peasants and consumers. After the World Food Summit the FAO engaged in a dialogue with the NGO Forum on Food Sovereignty which has a broad representation of the key actors in the agricultural sector. In this dialogue the FAO committed itself to strengthening the principle of food

sovereignty. The FAO's most recent annual report can only be interpreted as a betrayal of this dialogue.

For decades the FAO promoted the green revolution as the technological solution to hunger. However, the number of hungry people has continued to increase and now stands at 880 million. As a result of the development of industrial agriculture millions of rural people have been marginalized and driven from their land into a miserable existence. The multinational companies have become richer by selling pesticides, seeds and fertilisers at the expense of the livelihoods of peasants and small farmers. Now these multinational companies will get their way again in their attempt to gain full control over food production thus enabling them to increase their exploitation of the poor: With its report the FAO is paving the way for a broad introduction of GMO technology, a technology that carries high risks, and serves mainly to increase corporate control while destroying and marginalizing peasant-based farming.

One of the FAO's key conclusions seems to be "again" that hunger is a technological problem that can be solved with more directed investment in biotechnology and genetic engineering. Clearly, one of the key lessons of the so called "green revolution" is that hunger is a political problem that requires the political will to create stable markets for small food producers and give peasant families access to land and other productive resources. This is the only valid way to produce more and better food and to eradicate poverty in the rural areas. High tech solutions are not what peasants and small farmers need. And they certainly do not need a technology that includes uncontrollable risks and does not provide any progress for peasants. Genetic engineering has to be considered as a "huge set back" compared to the alternative solutions offered by agro-ecology and biodiversity management. Already the bulk of the private and public research money is going to biotechnology and genetic engineering thus depriving the alternatives from much needed support. And now FAO promotes this misguided technology even more!

Via Campesina demands a public retraction by FAO regarding this issue and a clear prioritisation of investment and public support for agro-ecological methods and peasant-based agriculture. Otherwise, we believe that further dialogue is useless because it makes civil society accessory to a policy of introduction of GMOs, a technology in which we see no solution at all and against which we will have to increase our struggle and resistance.

Via Campesina calls for a worldwide campaign against MONSANTO and Syngenta who we consider to be the key actors and driving forces in this issue. Via Campesina also calls for actions against this FAO position in order to make clear to FAO that its position is a betrayal of the dialogue and of the FAO own mission that states it strives to "better the condition of rural populations."

LET'S GLOBALIZE HOPE, LET'S GLOBALIZE THE STRUGGLE

International Co-ordinating Committee of Via Campesina

Tegucigalpa, May 21st, 2004

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