

**NGO Call to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development
on the Unsustainability of Modern Agricultural Biotechnologies
(Development, Release and Use of Genetically Modified Crops)**

It is evident that today the use of modern biotechnology and wide application of GMOs in agriculture does not meet principles of sustainable development. Chapter 16 of Agenda XXI is dedicated to *Environmentally Sound Management of Biotechnology*. In the preamble it is said: «By itself, biotechnology cannot resolve all the fundamental problems of environment and development, so expectations need to be tempered by realism».

Problems caused by wide-scale application of genetically modified crops (GM crops) are gaining actuality and acuity year by year. Analysis of GM crops performance in agriculture demonstrates that they did not contribute to the progress in any programme areas stated in Chapter 16 of Agenda XXI. Moreover, the use of GM crops in agriculture impedes achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals specifically - combating poverty and hunger.¹

Taking into account the agenda of the 16th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the significance of the sustainable agricultural development, we, representatives of NGOs from Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine having discussed the issues of GMOs during the Consultations of NGOs on Sustainability in Moscow, Russia (February 16-18, 2007), believe that currently GM-crops:

- Did nothing on *increasing the availability of food, feed and renewable raw materials*:
 - there is no data confirming that GM crops increased the yield potential of a traditional variety. On the contrary, there is much evidence of the converse: in USA², Brazil³, South Africa⁴, Australia⁵, etc;
 - practice demonstrated that the application of this technology led to the destruction of small scale farms and social destabilization in rural communities;⁶
 - GM-crops exacerbated the dependence of agrarian sector on pesticide use and stimulates further development and application of chemicals;⁷
 - GM crops threaten *environmentally sustainable agricultural practices* due to genetic and chemical contamination;⁸
 - GM crops contribute to the expansion of monocultures, the decrease of agricultural diversity, the elimination of indigenous varieties;⁹

¹ Juan Lopez et al., *Who Benefits From the GM Crops? An Analysis of the Global Performance of the GM Crops (1996-2006)*. Friends of the Earth International, 2007. <http://www.foei.org>

² Fernandez-Cornejo, J. & Caswell. April 2006. *Genetically Engineered Crops in the United States. USDA/ERS Economic Information Bulletin n. 11*. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib11/eib11.pdf>

³ CONAB, 2006. *Safra – Series Historicas. Soja*. <http://www.conab.gov.br/conabweb/download/safra/sojaseriehist.xls>

⁴ Cotton South Africa, 2006. *Hectares Planted and Yields for the RSA*.

⁵ Globecot, 28 November 2006. *Australia: Planted Cotton Acreage Fails to Meet Expectations*.

⁶ Cotton South Africa, 2006. *Small-scale Farmer Cotton Production in the RSA*.

⁷ Pechorn-Straus, E., April 2005. *Bt Cotton in South Africa: The Case of the Makhathini Farmers*. Biowatch South Africa, Seedling.

Quayum, A. and Sakkhari, K., 2003.

“Did BT Cotton Save Farmers in Warangal? A Season Long Impact Study of Bt Cotton. Kharif 2002” in Warangal District of Andhra Pradesh. Deccan Development Society. <http://www.ddsindia.com/btcotton.htm>

⁸ Pemsil et al., 2005. *“Why Do Some Bt Cotton Farmers in China Continue to Use High Levels of Pesticides?”* in International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability. Vol. 3, n. 1;

Charles M. Benbrook *“Pesticide use in the United States: the first nine years”* BioTech InfoNet Technical Paper №7, October 2004

⁹ D. Quist and I. Chapela, *“Transgenic DNA Introgressed into Traditional Maize Landraces in Oaxaca, Mexico,”* Nature 414, 6863 (November 29, 2001): 541-543

⁹ USDA, 6 October 2005. *Paraguay Biotechnology Annual 2005*. GAIN Report PA5005

- Did nothing on *improving human health* since any of existing GM products do not contribute to improving health, but generate risks. Unfortunately, there are facts that scientists are forced to conceal data on risks from GM-products;¹⁰
- Did nothing on *enhancing protection of the environment*, and on the contrary – led to the uncontrollable genetic contamination of genetic resources, to the decrease of biodiversity¹¹ and threatens the existence of centers of origin.¹²

Taking into consideration mentioned above, concerned NGOs of our countries are convinced that:

- massive distribution of GM-crops threatens the quality, diversity and safety of food, contributes to further undermining of small farmers livelihoods – core agricultural productive force of the planet;
- use of modern biotechnologies for food production and use of GM crops as a raw material for the production of biofuels and pharmaceuticals do not meet sustainability principles;
- EECCA countries are becoming more vulnerable to uncontrolled introduction, distribution and use of GM crops and products due to the lack of adequate legal and institutional base.

In connection with this, we express our position and call on the Commission on Sustainable Development to:

- Recognize that modern agricultural biotechnology (use of GM crops) does not meet sustainability criteria and did not reach the imposed targets;
- Exclude any reference to GM crops as an instrument of hunger and poverty reduction and of improving health from all subsequent UN CSD documents;
- Enhance world community efforts on the development of truly ecologically sound ways of agriculture, including organic agriculture and on the support of traditional agriculture and small-scale farming. Redirect into this the funds of international foundations, which are currently used to support agricultural biotechnology; and to abandon state subsidies to GM farmers;
- Create a legal mechanism providing accountability for genetic contamination. Damage caused by GM crops contamination should be covered by originators and not by traditional farmers and countries-importers. Countries should approve legislation protecting farmers from possible losses caused by contamination of their products. Legislation should also provide farmers with rights to take legal action against a company responsible for an incident.

With regard for the above said, we urge CSD to initiate moratorium on commercial use of GM crops in agriculture.

Moscow, Russian Federation
February 18, 2007
Participants of the Consultations of NGOs on Sustainability

¹⁰ Liz Lightfoot, "Scientists 'asked to fix results for backer'" Times Higher Education Supplement, Institute of Professionals, Managers, and Specialists, September 8, 2000

¹¹ Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment. *Advice on the implications of the farm-scale evaluations of genetically modified herbicidetolerant crops* // Defra, <http://www.defra.gov.uk>.

¹² *GM Contamination Register*, GeneWatch UK, Greenpeace International, 2006, <http://www.gmcontaminationregister.org>