



planetdiversity

WORLD CONGRESS ON THE FUTURE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE **BONN** GERMANY **12-16 MAY 2008**

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Combating world hunger: diversity not monocultures

Broad alliance organises May 12th demonstration against hunger, commodity market speculation and genetic engineering

To mark the start of negotiations on the UN Cartagena Biosafety Protocol (of the Convention on Biological Diversity) in Bonn, Germany, 80 farmers, development and environmental organisations have called for a demonstration for biodiversity: "Regional, fair and GMO-free!" Demanding a radical change in agricultural policy, with fair food prices, free access to seeds and knowledge and free choice of food and cultivation methods, they say "no" to industrial monocultures and biofuels, and to subsidies for cheap meat production, "no" to genetic engineering firms that refuse to accept liability for damages, and "no" to commodity speculation on the world market which could kill millions of people.

Rally speakers include *Vandana Shiva (India)*, *Farida Akhter (Bangladesh)*, *Percy Schmeiser (Canada)*, *Mamadou Coulibali (Mali)*, a representative of *Via Campesina (Brazil)*, *Ibolya Tamás és Gedó (Hungary)*, *Maya Graf (Green Member of Swiss Parliament)*, *Ulrich Kelber (Social Democrat Member of German Parliament)*, *Dorothee Lindenkamp (farmer)*, *Claudia Warning (Assoc. of Development NGOs)*, *Hubert Weiger (BUND)*, *F.-W. Graefe zu Baringdorf (German Family Farmers Union, Green Member of European Parliament)* and *Benny Haerlin (Planet Diversity)*.

From May 12, delegates from the 140 Cartagena Biosafety Protocol signatory states will negotiate international liability regulations for damages due to genetic engineering. *Hubert Weiger, chairman of Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland*: "We call upon the German Government to drop their soft line with large genetic engineering companies and stand up for mandatory international liability regulations, as farmers in developing countries have been without any legal protection against possible damages and contamination of their crops due to GMOs."

"The food price explosion around the world is not due to crop failures or shortages. It is a consequence of speculation and unfair competition on the world's commodity markets," explains *Rudolf Buntzel of the Evangelischen Entwicklungsdienst EED*. "First, liberalisation and price dumping forced developing countries to become dependent on food imports, now they are faced with disaster: their own agriculture lies in ruins, while import prices have become exorbitant. Millions of people are experiencing new misery and avoidable hunger."

"Germany and the EU must immediately halt their plans for blending biofuels with diesel and petrol," demands *Stephanie Töwe of Greenpeace*. "Car drivers must not be forced to burn food for fuel while the poorest of the world have nothing to eat."

“The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) only recently called for a radical change in agricultural policies to guarantee a sustainable and fair food supply without destruction of its natural and social base. Innovative use and distribution of well-adapted technologies is the key to success. We must reduce the input of energy and pesticides and instead promote small farmer structures and regional self-determination in agricultural and food policies,” says *Reiner Braun, director of the Association of German Scientists.*

“Organic farming and other forms of ecological agriculture demonstrate, especially in countries of the global South, that a radical energy and pesticide reduction is possible without loss in nutritional value and with large benefits for rural development,” argues *Gerald A. Herrmann, president of IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements.*

“A few chemical and genetic engineering companies try to profit from the misery they contributed to in the first place. They are not part of the solution but part of the problem. Genetic engineering kills jobs in agriculture, results in agro-industry, uses mainly monoculture for crop and energy plants, does not increase profits and certainly fails to contribute to food security,” explains *Friedrich Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf of the German Family Farmers Union.*

“The decisive question is: diversity or monoculture?” concludes *Benedikt Haerlin of the Foundation on Future Farming.* “For millions of years, diversity has been the only reliable innovative force of nature. Agro-industrial monocultures are its worst enemy. Freezing seeds in the Arctic and digitalising and patenting gene banks is not enough to stop the extinction of species and the destruction of agricultural diversity. Diversity must live to develop and to preserve. Biodiversity will only survive and flourish with cultural diversity on this planet: we are diversity!”

Further Information

Demonstration, *Festival of Diversity* in Bonn and *international conference “Planet Diversity,”* May 13 – 15 with more than 500 participants from 90 countries: www.planet-diversity.org.

Background to this press release: www.planet-diversity.org/Mai2

Contact:

Benedikt Haerlin, 030 27590309

Mone Volke, Planet Diversity, Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit

Tel: 030 28 48 23 25, Fax: 030 27 59 03 12, presse@planet-diversity.org

c/o Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft, Marienstr. 19-20, 10117 Berlin

