

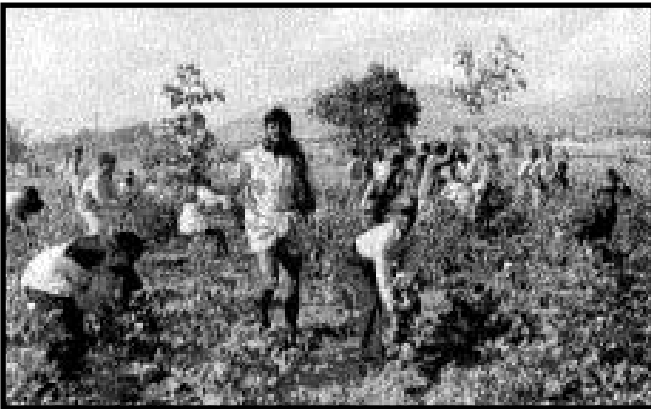
what they did

All over the world people are standing up to the threats against their land and food.

The 2002 Earth Summit in Johannesburg hosted more Monsanto representatives than delegates from the whole African continent. Yet despite World Trade Organisation threats of sanctions on any nation trying to restrict GM food or crops for 'creating barriers to free trade', all the African delegates and EU representatives withdrew their agreement to allow the WTO to overrule any of the the Summit decisions.

Over 1200 Brazilian farmers responded to Monsanto's activities in their country by occupying its research station and pulling up GM corn and soya trials. They remained for several days, decorating its walls with "*these seeds trick farmers and create dependency on seeds produced by a big multinational*" and "*Monsanto is the end of farmers*".

In August 2001 eight hundred farmers, church people, students and other members of civil society in the Philippines uprooted 1700 square metres of experimental GM maize.



The Karnataka State Farmers' Union in action.

In January 2001 three hundred Indian farmers pulled up and burnt a trial of GM cotton as part of their 'cremate Monsanto' campaign.

what you can do

The biotech industry spends millions of pounds on public relations, but it only works if people don't challenge it. Talk to your friends about the issue, hold a stall in your high street, write to the papers, **get the message out.**

GM food is still entering the food chain through animal feed. Most dairy and meat products come from animals fed on GM crops, and this backdoor route supports well over half of the GM industry. Profits from these foods go directly to the big biotech companies. **Put pressure on supermarkets and other suppliers to ban GM feed.**

All organic produce has a GM-free guarantee, but better still try and **get on a local veg box scheme.** For details of



suppliers in your area look up **www.bigbarn.co.uk.** Growing your own food is also a great way to cut out the corporations altogether, and your local council should have allotments to rent cheaply. To ensure that products you purchase aren't exploiting people, always buy fair-trade goods.

GM crops are being tested all over Britain. Holding up their development here has already sent a strong message to the rest of the world about how much we want to resist this technology too. **For more information on how to campaign against crops growing near you contact the Genetic Engineering Network on 0845 456 9329 or www.geneticsaction.org.uk**

This is just a brief introduction to a very complex issue. For more detailed information contact **Action Aid on 020 7281 4101 or www.actionaid.org**

This leaflet was produced by the Totnes Genetics Group, and references for the statistics given here are available from them on **01803 840098.**

Question everything...

Jan 2003

genetic engineering and the struggle for the seed



who says GE's the answer?

In 1998 the big seed and chemical company Monsanto launched an advertising campaign to promote Genetic Engineering to Europe, with the slogan: *"Slowing its acceptance is a luxury our hungry world cannot afford."*

Later that year representatives from all African countries (except South Africa), who were representing their governments at the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation, responded to the adverts with a statement to the press:

"We strongly object that the image of the poor and hungry from our countries is being used by giant multinational corporations to push a technology that is neither safe, environmentally friendly, nor economically beneficial to us. We do not believe that such companies or gene technologies will help our farmers to produce the food that is needed in the 21st century. On the contrary, we think it will destroy the diversity, the local knowledge and the sustainable agricultural systems that our farmers have developed over millennia and that it will thus undermine our capacity to feed ourselves."

- According to the UN we are already producing one and a half times the amount of food needed to feed the world, but one in seven people suffers from hunger.
- 78% of all malnourished children under the age of five live in countries with food surpluses.
- In 1984, at the height of the famine in Ethiopia, oilseed rape, linseed and cottonseed were being grown on prime agricultural land to be exported as feed for livestock to the UK and Europe.
- For every £1 that the West gives in aid to majority world countries, £6 is paid back by these same countries in debt repayments.

Golden rice?

One of the biotech industry's favourite examples is a rice genetically engineered to have higher levels of vitamin A. The industry says that this 'Golden Rice' is the most 'practical' solution to deficiency of this vitamin, which affects millions of malnourished people around the world.

Concern was raised however when independent scientists found out that an adult woman would need to eat about 9kg of this rice every day to get the recommended daily amount of vitamin A.

- Countries in debt are effectively forced to grow cash crops like coffee and sugar rather than feeding their own populations. These exports are used to repay loans taken out by governments for things like dam projects, pipelines and weapons purchases (often tied to deals with British companies).

"There are still hungry people in Ethiopia, but they are hungry because they have no money, no longer because there is no food to buy. We strongly resent the abuse of our poverty to sway the interests of the European public."

Tewolde Egziabher, Africa's spokesperson at UN Biosafety negotiations

- As part of a joint submission to the UK government's official GM debate in November 2002, Britain's top aid charities stated that GM foods will not solve world hunger and may actually increase poverty and malnutrition, saying that claims that GM will feed the world are 'misleading'.

"Seeds have to stay in women's hands, I don't want the companies' seeds."

Most genetically engineered seeds are designed to be herbicide resistant. Some even have 'traitor genes', which make 'junkie plants' that are only able to grow when sprayed with the companies' own brand chemicals.

'Terminator' seeds are designed to be infertile, so farmers cannot save seeds from their crop to plant again next year, but must go back to the company to buy more.

Such products will only benefit massive farms with more machinery, that need fewer labourers, thus increasing unemployment. GM cotton threatens 20 million jobs in Andhra Pradesh, India, in this way.

GM 'controlled ripening' coffee beans are engineered so that the whole crop can be picked at once by a machine. This would threaten the jobs of at least half of the world's 60 million coffee workers.

Many farmers are already suffering from tough contracts with seed companies. Trapped by impossible personal debts after the failure of the cotton harvest in 1997 at least two hundred smallholders in Andhra Pradesh committed suicide.

Letting corporations take control of the food supply will always mean that profits are seen as more important than people.

GM gives multinationals total control of the global food chain.



Anjuman Ara,
Chakaria farmer