

## JOINT SIGN-ON STATEMENT

### **FAO Symposium on Biotechnology: The biotechnology industry runs the show**

The undersigned representatives of peasant and other Civil Society organizations, men and women, express our concern and alarm about the *FAO International Symposium on "The Role of Agricultural Biotechnologies in Sustainable Food Systems and Nutrition"*<sup>1</sup> to be held at FAO headquarters in Rome on 15-17 February 2016.

We are concerned as to why FAO has decided to hold this Symposium, and why now. We remember the disastrous last attempt by FAO to act as an undercover agent for biotechnology companies, by organizing the International Technical Conference on Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 2010.<sup>2</sup>

We are alarmed that FAO is once again fronting for the same corporations, just when these companies are talking about further mergers amongst themselves, which would concentrate the commercial seeds sector in even fewer hands. FAO should act as a knowledge center, rather than as a promoter of the ideological approach of the private sector. Unfortunately the program for this symposium is designed to showcase the "benefits" of GMOs, artificial genetic constructs created with possibly even more dangerous technologies, and other biotechnologies held by a handful of TNCs.

In 2014 Last year FAO hosted an international symposium on agroecology and last year three regional meetings to discuss with governments and civil society how to move the agroecology agenda forward.<sup>3</sup> Those activities were much closer to the way that FAO should act, as a center for knowledge exchange, without a hidden agenda on behalf of a few. Yet in this case, truly useful peasant-based technologies must take a backseat to those that only serve to advance corporate profits.

It is clear that, through the FAO, industry wants to re-launch their false message that genetically engineered crops can feed the world and cool the planet, while the reality is that nothing has changed on the biotech front. GMOs don't feed people, they are mostly planted in a handful of countries on industrial plantations for agrofuels and animal feed, they increase pesticide use, and they throw farmers off the land.<sup>4</sup> The industrial food system that it promotes is one of the main drivers of climate change.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/agphome/agribiotech/Programme\\_Overview\\_detailed.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/agphome/agribiotech/Programme_Overview_detailed.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gmwatch.org/news/archive/2010/11990-fao-condemned-for-shameless-promotion-of-gmos62>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/news-events-bulletins/detail/en/item/346167/icode/?no\\_cache=1](http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/news-events-bulletins/detail/en/item/346167/icode/?no_cache=1)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.grain.org/e/4720>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.grain.org/e/5102>

If anything, the situation has worsened over the past years:

- The quality of private sector agricultural research has been declining, even as their expenditures have increased, leading to vulnerability among seed and crop chemical input companies;
- As a result, mergers and acquisitions are being planned with, and among, the Big Six seed/pesticide corporations that already control 75% of global private sector research and development in agriculture;
- In desperation the surviving companies are calling for “climate-smart” agriculture, demanding protection from anti-cartel/competition regulators, pushing for more intellectual property rights and for increased public subsidies to allow them to go ahead with their plans.
- The same corporations are going beyond conventional GMO plant varieties toward “extreme biotech” strategies such as synthetic biology to create new genetic constructs, and trying, once again, to overturn the UN moratorium against Terminator seeds. Not only do they ignore the rights of farmers, they are using biotechnologies to patent plant genes that are already in peasants’ fields and that we have selected ourselves. With collaboration of the Seed Treaty, the so called Divseek program offers totally free access to all the gene sequences of the seeds that we have given free of charge to the gene banks. With the new biotechnologies for editing the genome, international corporations re-compose these genes in order to patent them. They want to forbid us to produce our own seeds and oblige us to buy their patented GMOs every year as well as their toxic pesticides, indispensable to grow those GMOs.
- In animal husbandry and fisheries where transgenic salmon and pigs already exist, we see the same scenario, the strengthening of industrial production and the increase in the use of antibiotics....

We remember the last time FAO allowed the biotech giants to push them into an international conference, in Guadalajara in 2010, at which the FAO worked hard, as in this case, to limit the involvement and participation of La Vía Campesina and other CSOs, and was publicly condemned for shameless promotion of GMOs by many organizations across the world<sup>6</sup>.

Why does FAO limit itself to corporate biotechnology and deny the existence of peasant technologies? It is time to stop pushing this narrow corporate biotech agenda. The vast majority of the world's farmers are peasants, and it is peasants who feed the world. We need peasant-based technologies, not corporate biotechnologies.

**It is high time that FAO gets its priorities clear. Rather than allowing corporations to push their biotechnology agendas, FAO should forcefully pursue agroecology and food sovereignty as the path to feed the world and cool the planet!**

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.gmwwatch.org/news/archive/2010/11990-fao-condemned-for-shameless-promotion-of-gmos62>

## **International and Regional Organizations**

ActionAid International  
African Biodiversity Network (ABN)  
Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)  
Asian Peasant Coalition (APC)  
Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD)  
Campaña Mesoamericana para la Justicia Climática  
CICODEV Africa  
Coordinación Regional del Frente Parlamentario contra el Hambre de América Latina y el Caribe  
Comité pour l'Annulation de la Dette du Tiers Monde (CADTM International)  
Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE)  
Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO), Brussels  
ETC Group  
Focus on the Global South India, Thailand and Philippines  
Friends of the Earth International  
Global Campaign to Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity  
GRAIN  
Greenpeace International  
Growth Partners Africa –GPA  
Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC)  
International Indian Treaty Council (IITC)  
La Via Campesina  
Movimiento Agroecológico de América Latina y el Caribe (MAELA)  
NO VOX INTERNATIONAL  
Pan-Africanist International  
Pelum Association, Africa  
Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo (PIDHDD Regional)  
Red interamericana de economía solidaria de latinoamérica y el caribe. RIPESS LAC  
Red por una América Latina Libre de Transgénicos  
Red de Acción en Plaguicidas y sus Alternativas para América Latina (RAPAL)  
RIPESS Europe  
RIPESS Intercontinental  
Slow Food  
Society for International Development (SID)  
Solidarity Economy Europe  
Transnational Institute (TNI)  
Urgenci Europe  
Urgenci International Network  
World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP)  
World Public Health Nutrition Association  
World Rainforest Movement (WRM)

## **National and Local Organizations**

Acción Ecológica, Ecuador  
ADTM International, Belgium  
African Center for Biodiversity, South Africa and Tanzania  
Agriculture Sovereignty Ghana  
AGRECOL, Germany  
AIAB, Italy  
ALIANZA DERECHO HUMANO A LA ALIMENTACIÓN –ADHAC, , Guatemala  
Alianza por una Mejor Calidad de Vida/Red de Acción en Plaguicidas de Chile, RAP-  
Chile  
Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)  
Alliance for Sustainable & Holistic Agriculture (ASHA), India  
ALTERNATIVAS (COMCAUSA), Mexico  
AMAR Environment Defense Association, Brazil  
APROMAC Environment Protection Association, Brazil  
Articulação de Agroecologia na Bahia- (AABA), Brazil  
Articulação Semiárido Brasileiro (ASA), Brazil  
Asian Peasant Coalition (APC)  
Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD)  
Associação Brasileira de Agroecologia (ABA), Brazil  
Associação Gaúcha de Proteção ao Ambiente Natural (AGAPAN), Brazil  
Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Agroecologia (AOPA), Brazil  
Association Citoyenne de Défenses des Intérêts Collectifs (ACDIC), Cameroon  
ATTAC Argentina  
ATTAC France  
ATTAC CADTM, Morocco  
Attac Côte d'Ivoire  
Australian Food Sovereignty Allianc  
BioScience Resource Project, USA  
Bread for the World, Germany  
CADTM, Maroc  
Campaña Yo No Quiero Transgénicos, Chile  
Censat Agua Viva - Amigos de la Tierra, Colombia  
Center for Research and Documentation Chile-Latin America, Germany  
Centre Europe-Tiers Monde (CETIM), Switzerland  
Centro de Derechos Humanos "Fray Francisco de Vitoria OP", A.C., Mexico  
CENTRO DE DIREITOS HUMANOS E EMPRESAS (HOMA), UFJF, Brazil  
Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos “Segundo Montes Mozo S.J.” ,  
Ecuador  
Centro Ecologico, Brasil  
Çiftçi-SEN (Confederation of Farmers' Unions), Turkey  
CSMM, Ecuador  
CCFD-Terre Solidaire, France  
Coalition for a GM-Free India, India  
Coldiretti, Italy  
Colectivo Revuelta Verde, Mexico

Colectivo VientoSur, Chile  
Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, Ecuador  
Community to Community, USA  
Comunidades Campesinas y Urbanas Solidarias con Alternativas, México  
Conselho Nacional das Populações Extrativistas (CNS), Brazil  
Cooperativa por un Ambiente Biodiverso y Sustentable, CAMBIOS, S.C., Mexico  
Cooperativa Semilla Austral, Chile  
Coordinadora de Movimientos Populares para la Integración Latinoamericana  
Coordination Climat Justice Sociale, Switzerland  
Earthlife Africa, South Africa  
Ecologistas en Acción, Spain  
Ekologistak Martxan, Spain  
Educación, Cultura y Ecología, A. C. (Educe AC.), Mexico  
FASE - Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional, Brazil  
Food First, USA  
Food Sovereignty Ghana  
Foro Ciudadano de Participación por la Justicia y los Derechos Humanos, Argentina  
Friends of the Earth U.S.A.  
Fronteras Comunes A.C., Mexico  
Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho (FESPAD), El Salvador  
Fundación Mundubat, Basque Country  
GE Free New Zealand  
Générations Futures, France  
Global Justice Alliance, USA  
Grupo Coletivo Triunfo de Agricultores Familiares, Brazil  
Grupo de Agroecología y Soberanía Alimentaria (GASA), Panama  
Grupo de Coordinación Ampliado del Grupo Carta de Belém, Brazil  
GUERREROS VERDES A.C., Mexico  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, USA  
Institute for Research and Promotion of alternatives in development (IRPAD), Mali  
Instituto de Estudios Ecologistas del Tercer Mundo, Ecuador  
Jubileu Sul, Brasil  
Kenya Biodiversity Coalition  
Kenya Food Rights Alliance – KeFRA  
Kenya Food Rights Alliance –KeFRA  
La Asamblea Veracruzana de Iniciativas y Defensa Ambiental (LAVIDA)  
Laboratorio de Investigación en Desarrollo Comunitario y Sustentabilidad, Mexico  
La Fédération Unie de Groupements d’Eleveurs et d’Agriculteurs (FUGEA), Belgium  
Living Farms, India  
Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Chile  
MASIPAG, Philippines  
Mesa Nacional frente a la Minería Metálica (MNFM), El Salvador  
Mesa Permanente por la Justicia Laboral (MPJL), El Salvador  
Millennium Institute, USA  
Mouvement "Nous Sommes la Solution", Senegal  
Mouvement d'Action Paysanne (MAP), Belgium

Movement Generation, USA  
Movimiento de los Pequeños Agricultores-MPA, Brazil  
Movimiento Nacional en Defensa de la Tierra (MOVITIERRA), El Salvador  
Navdanya, India  
Never Ending Food, Malawi  
Organic Systems, New Zealand  
Other Worlds, USA  
PACS - Institute Alternative Policies for the Southern Cone of Latin America, Brazil  
PAPDA, Haïti  
Peuples Solidaires-ActionAid, France  
PLATAFORMA DE ECONOMÍA SOLIDARIA (PECOSOL), Guatemala  
rede de Comunidades Tradicionais Pantaneira, Brazil  
Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia, Brazil  
Red de Accion por los Derechos Ambientales (RADA), Temuko, Chile.  
RED DE HUERTOS URBANOS DE TALCA, Chile  
Red de Semillas Libres de Chile  
RED SOCIOAMBIENTAL SEMILLAS, Chile  
Red Mexicana de Acción Ecológica y Pacifista [Red ECOPAZ]  
RELUFA (Network for the Fight Against Hunger), Cameroon  
Save Our Seeds, Germany  
Semillas de Vida, Mexico  
Serviço de assessoria a organizações populares rurais (SASOP), Brazil  
Solidaridad Suecia - América Latina, Sweden  
South Durban Community environmental Alliance, South Africa  
Sri Lanka Nature Group  
Sunray Harvesters, India  
Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania (SAT)  
Tanzania Alliance for Biodiversity (TABIO), Tanzania  
Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM), Tanzania  
Tarım Orkam-Sen, Turkey  
Terra de Direitos, Brazil  
Terra Nuova, Italy  
The Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and Biodiversity Conservation  
TOXISPHERA Environmental Health Association, Brazil  
Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE), South Africa  
Unidad de la Fuerza Indígena y Campesina (UFIC), México  
Unidad Ecológica Salvadoreña (UNES), El Salvador  
Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), Palestine  
US Food Sovereignty Alliance, USA  
USC CANADA  
Vía Orgánica, Mexico  
War on Want, UK  
WhyHunger, USA