

No to transgenic maize!
Red en Defensa del Maíz
23 de abril de 2009

To the people of Mexico

To the peoples of the world

To the Mexican government

To the Convention on Biological Diversity / Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

To the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations / FAO

The indigenous and peasant organizations and communities, environmental organizations, popular education organizations, base organizations, ecclesiastical communities, groups of producers, members of urban movements, scholars, scientists, and political analysts of the Network In Defense of Maize vigorously repudiate the planting of transgenic maize in Mexico. It is a historic crime against the peoples of maize, against biodiversity and food sovereignty, against ten thousand years of indigenous and peasant agriculture that bequeathed this seed for the wellbeing of all the peoples of the world.

We assert that the presidential decree of March 6, 2009, which allows the planting of transgenic maize, intentionally fails to consider that:

Mexico is the center of origin and diversity of maize. There are over 59 known races and thousands of varieties, which will be inevitably contaminated.

It is indigenous and peasant peoples who created and preserve this genetic treasure of maize, one of the main crops on which human and animal nourishment depends around the globe.

Maize is the basic food source for the Mexican population. There are no studies of what happens when a population eats large quantities. And in México the consumption of maize happens in large quantities. There are scientific studies which, at much smaller levels of consumption, report allergies and other negative impacts on the health of humans and animals fed with transgenic food.

The varieties of transgenic maize which are being proposed for planting in the country do not solve Mexico's agricultural problems: They are more expensive, since the cost of seeds and licensing are greater than those associated with conventional crops; they do not have a greater rate of return: it is equal or less, unless there is a strong incidence of pests which are not common in Mexico; they require more pesticides since they constantly emit Bt toxins, which generate resistance and secondary pests that must be controlled with other pesticides.

These crops will damage biodiversity and the environment. Since Mexico is an extremely biodiverse country, no research undertaken in other environments is applicable because the variables and interconnections increase exponentially. Since

maize is an open pollinated crop, avoiding transgenic contamination is impossible when cultivated in open fields. Contamination also occurs in warehouses, during transportation, and in industrial facilities.

Transgenic crops are useless for peasant or organic agriculture, but they will unavoidably contaminate native and criollo varieties of maize, while threatening organic production, which will lose its market niche.

All transgenic seeds are patented and are controlled by six multinational companies (Monsanto, Syngenta, DuPont, Dow, Bayer, BASF), which results in a complete dependence of peasants and farm workers on these multinationals and criminalizes the victims of contamination.

The native peoples of Mexico created maize and they have been the guardians and creators of the diversity of varieties currently in existence. Food sovereignty and the preservation of this diversity depend on the integrity of their rights. Because of that, transgenic contamination is an assault on the identity of Mesoamerican peoples and is an act of aggression against ten thousand years of agriculture. The planting of transgenic maize is a frontal attack against native and peasant peoples and a violation of their rights.

For the peoples that constitute Mexico, maize is not merchandise, but the origin of a civilization and the foundation of the livelihood of peasant lives and economies.

We will not let our seeds be lost or contaminated by transgenes owned by transnational companies. We will not comply with unfair laws that criminalize seeds and peasant lifestyle. We will continue protecting maize and the life of our peoples.

We place responsibility for the loss and damage of Mexican maize on the companies that produce transgenic seeds; on the legislative powers that approved the Law of Biosafety and Genetically Modified Organisms ("Monsanto Law") for the benefit of corporations; on the Mexican government; on the secretaries of Agriculture, Environment and the Intersecretarial Commission on Biosafety and GMOs (CIBIOGEM), who are responsible for the final measures to eliminate all legal protections of maize.

For all of those reasons:

We repudiate the experimental or commercial cultivation of transgenic maize and demand that it be banned in Mexico.

We repudiate the "Monsanto Law" its bylaws, and any other mechanism to criminalize peasant seeds.

We repudiate government monitoring of peasant cornfields, because it is a pretext for eliminating even more peasant seeds.

We commit ourselves, and call on all indigenous and peasant communities and peoples to do the same: defend native seeds and continue planting, storing, exchanging, and distributing their own seeds, as well as exercising their right over their territories and preventing the cultivation of transgenic maize.

We call on the population to demand that all produce we consume on a daily basis is GMO-free.

We call on international agencies to condemn the government of Mexico for this violation of peasant ancestral rights, biodiversity, food sovereignty, and the precautionary principle in centers of origin of basic crops for world nourishment and economy.

NO TO TRANSGENIC MAIZE!
NETWORK IN DEFENSE OF MAIZE