

From: Sandra Cleisz [sanclei@earthlink.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 08, 2004 7:16 PM
To: Chantal Line Carpentier
Subject: Article 13: Transgenic maize

I would like to make a public comment regarding the joint public advisory committee meeting held in Oaxaca, Mexico on March 12, 2004, and on the Commission for Environmental Cooperation's study of transgenic maize introduced to Mexico.

I am an environmental planner in Sonoma County, California, and happened to be in Oaxaca when the meeting took place. I attended the meeting and found it fascinating and highly informative. I have the following comments to make, and hope that you will consider them in your report to NAFTA.

First, it was clear to me that 99.9% of the public comments made at the meeting were about stopping transgenic corn from entering Mexico, and especially from entering the area deep within Mexico where corn was born and developed over millenia. I believe that the comments made at the meeting reflect the feelings and beliefs of a broad spectrum of people, from farmers and peasants, workers in town, interested people from everywhere, many scientists, activists of many kinds, etc. I also support this belief that under NAFTA, the original resources of the people of an area, and especially corn and food products, should be respected and left alone. Transgenic corn, and mixed (part transgenic or genetically-modified agricultural products, mixed in with non gm products) should not be introduced into Mexico, as such products could endanger the original food, possibly modifying the genetic integrity of corn especially, (an open-pollinated crop) and endangering the food supply for millions of people throughout the world.

Labelling is extremely important, so that people everywhere can understand what product is being sold, and if it contains any GM condition. But labelling is not enough in this case--as the danger of people planting imported GM corn is too high due to the labelling not being understood, or not adequate to explain the dangers to the future of corn production in Mexico. Labelling may be too difficult also due to large shipments being labelled, but after being broken into individual bags, the labelling could disappear. Labelling would have to be more thorough than a scientist or policymaker can even imagine for it to work adequately, and to provide the conscious choice and free will that is so necessary, but inadequate to protect a unique life form.

The other interesting thing that i heard over and over, and completely agree with, is the insistence upon use of the Precautionary Principle: that until 20 to 30 years of research with this corn proves that it is viable over the long term and through disasters, global warming events, etc, AND does not cause any harm of any kind to humans, animals, other plants, and ecosystems in general, that it

should not be brought in/imported or used in Mexico. The research should be funded by and through joint government agencies of the 3 countries (or more if interested), but NOT by those seeking to profit from such products. The research must be independent.

I was especially struck by the lack of studies and relevant research on the natural systems of Mexico, much less about transgenics and corn. None of the scientists had any relevant answers to any of the deep questions being asked and the statements being made, and in fact, most of the scientists there appeared to agree that a lot of research is needed before any definitive statement can be made. The studies that were presented were a very light overview of what has been found so far, and not helpful in discussing the issue comprehensively.

Diversity is critically important to humankind as well as to the entire world we live in of multiple species and beings--plants, animals, soil, bacteria, ecosystems balance, etc. We cannot ignore this issue, and we must not allow corporations who wish to control certain products from forcing decisions on policymakers such as the Commission, and on NAFTA officials, that could affect the future of life on earth. Please take the time needed to consider carefully each decision and recommendation, and recommend the immediate stopping of importation of transgenic products (especially corn-maize) to Mexico.

Thank you very much.
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