

Media statement on the ISAAA GM Crop Lobby 2012 Report

GM crops remain a global failure

Press release - 8 February, 2012

Wednesday 8 February 2012, Sydney: Greenpeace responded today to a report on the perceived success of genetically modified (GM) crops around the world, which was published by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), a bio-tech industry lobby organisation.

"Contrary to claims in the report, GM crops remain a global failure with only about 1% of global farmers cultivating GM crops. [i]" said Greenpeace campaigner Éric Darrier.

"There are so many oversights and exaggerations in this report that is hard to know where to start," said Mr Darrier.

For example, the 'acreage' of GM crops is completely exaggerated in the report through the presentation of acreage by 'trait' rather than the actual acreage of a crop. If a particular plant is cultivated on 100 hectares, ISAAA does not calculate its acreage as 100 hectares; they consider how many traits (characteristics) have been inserted into the ground. In the case of a crop that is stacked with three traits (e.g. pesticide producing + tolerance to 2 herbicides), the acreage is presented as 3 times 100 hectares = 300 hectares, wrongly tripling the acreage and misleading alike.

GM food and crops are still rejected in most parts of the world by concerned consumers, farmers and governments. Around 90% of the GM crops are commercialised by the giant agro-chemical US company Monsanto. After 16 years of commercialisation, just four countries in the Americas (US, Argentina, Brazil and Canada) represent 80% of the world GM crops acreage. Recent attempts to introduce GM food to China (GM rice) and India (GM aubergine) failed[i].

"GM crops remain controversial because they have not been adequately tested by independent scientists. Most data that are the basis for government's approval for GM crops are conducted by scientists who work either directly or indirectly for biotech companies. Moreover this data is confidential and not available for counter evaluation by independent and credible experts," said Mr. Darier.

"This is why the plan to commercialise GM wheat in Australia as soon as 2015 is completely irresponsible. According to an Australian industry report released last year, 80% of international customers for Australian wheat do not want GM wheat[ii]. The fact that Australia is yet to ratify the United Nation Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety will not reassure our international wheat customers."

In recent years, the use of GM crops (soya, canola, corn, cotton) tolerant to glyphosate-based herbicides like Roundup has also led to increased weeds or volunteers resistance that forces farmers to spray even more toxic herbicides.[iii]

"Contrary to the ISAAA claims, GM crops remain a global failure. It is time to move on to better farming and agricultural solutions," said Mr Darier.

Media Contact:

Elsa Evers 0438 204 041

Notes

[i] See: <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/news/features/China-says-no-to-genetically-engineered-rice/> and <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/news/features/monsanto-GE-brinjal100210/>.

[ii] <http://www.greenpeace.org/australia/en/what-we-do/Food/resources/reports/No-appetite-for-Australian-GM-wheat/>

[iii] <http://www.greenpeace.org/australia/en/what-we-do/Food/resources/reports/Herbicide-tolerance-and-GM-crops/>

loading