

# PELUM BULLETIN

**P**articipatory **E**cological **L**and-**U**se **M**anagement Association  
*A civil society network in east, central and southern Africa  
promoting sustainable communities.*



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## Editorial

**W**elcome to yet another PELUM Association Bulletin. I sincerely hope you will find it just as interesting as the others before it.

The last issue of the bulletin (April issue) contained an article which questioned the relevancy of the Cartagena Protocol. A debate ensued and it is our hope that from that article, we should all see that the fight against GMOs that PELUM and all of us have embarked on is huge and we thus need to be vigilant. As you might have noted the author of that article is high ranking government official in the Jamaican (developing country) government who is influential. It is therefore saddening as there may be many other influential government officials in our countries that may be advocating for GMOs.

This however should not make us lose hope but rather it should make us work even harder in our resolve to promote sustainable methods of production that will ensure all inclusiveness and sustained food security. This therefore calls for renewed strength and re-strategising over and over again and trying new ideas on how we can continually engage in impact oriented advocacy against GMOs.

Building on this, we would like to clarify that the PELUM stand on GMOs, which you will find in this bulletin, still stands and the placing of the article on the Cartagena Protocol in the last Bulletin does not in any way change this. We would also like to clarify that PELUM still believes in and will continue working towards enhancing the livelihoods of smallholder farmers as this is one of the surest way of reducing poverty. The article was merely placed for information and was not in any way intended to undermine what you have all worked tirelessly for. The article was also meant to let you know how other people think about GMOs and soliciting from you a stronger resolve to dispel such thinking. Your animosity directed at the article was therefore what the placing of the article was intended to get and we are hopeful that we shall continue debating on many of such issues.

Against this background, this Bulletin contains many articles on GMOs and other issues related to sustainable development. In particular, you will read about the NEPAD organised Fertilizer Summit that was held in Nigeria from the 9<sup>th</sup> -12 of June 2006. IFOAM and PELUM Zambia criticised this Summit for promoting the use of Fertilizers which have obviously failed to ensure food security for the majority of the rural poor. Another angle by scientists is also given and it gives dismal arguments for promoting fertilizers.

In March 2006, governments met yet again at international level to discuss agrarian reform, please find what they committed themselves to, for advocacy as we need to keep reminding our governments on issues that they commit themselves to.

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue of the bulletin just as you did the last one and I look forward to receiving feedback from you.

Marjorie Chola Chonya  
Editor

## Patented GM Crops: Making Seed Saving Illegal?

**By Teresa Anderson, Gaia Foundation, UK**

**A**mong much talk of the future of GM crops in Africa, among the claims of higher yields, pest resistance and solutions to hunger, and the acknowledgement of the risks to health, environment and markets, there is a consistent and glaring omission from the GM debate. While ministers, scientists and policy makers talk of Biosafety frameworks, and the costs and benefits of GMOs, all seem blind to the issue which is of most concern to African farmers: the issue of patented GM crops and how this will affect farmers' rights to save seed.

GM crops are patented by multinational companies such as Monsanto and Syngenta. Patenting, or claiming of intellectual property rights (IPRs) means that farmers who buy GM seeds are forbidden from seed saving by law, and must buy new seed from the company each season. GM crops are significantly more expensive than conventional or hybrid crops. In India, for example, Monsanto's Bt cotton can be three times the price of conventional cotton seed.

The implications of patented GM seeds for African farmers should not be underestimated. Saved seed is the one resource that the poorest depend upon to carry them through the year. If they are forbidden to save their seed and must pay up to triple the costs of buying new seed each season, the costs of growing food will become prohibitive. The claims of lowered production costs do not stand up to scrutiny. Neither are the yields of GM crops sufficient to recover the costs

It is ironic (or inappropriate) that while GM purports to help to solve hunger and poverty in Africa, it may instead place an impossible burden on the poorest farmers, the very people at whom this technology is supposedly aimed.

Very few African farmers are aware that patented GM crops will make seed saving illegal. Even policy makers seem largely unaware or uninterested in this fact. This glaring omission needs to be addressed, to help governments and farmers make policy from an informed position.

International NGOs working on food security issues are in agreement that patented GM crops present a serious threat to farmers and food rights. Organisations such as Action Aid, Christian Aid, Genetic Resources Action International (GRAIN) and even the UK Government's own Commission on Intellectual Property Rights all warn of the negative consequences to seed saving, food sovereignty and farmers' rights should patented GM crops be accepted in developing countries. However, these warnings have been consistently ignored by the majority of the media and policymakers in Africa.

According to GRAIN, the patenting of crops "is an attempt to privatize Africa's innovative practices and biological resources and reorganize its seed markets for the benefit of foreign corporations. Africa's farmers and the abundant knowledge and plant diversity they have nurtured are bound to be trampled over in the process, threatening Africa's already fragile food security."

Africa's farmers, like all small farmers around the world, will be affected most directly by any consequences. Social and economic risks from GM crops are equally weighty. They will increase dependence on outside technologies, marginalize farmers from R&D, and

*Cont'd from page 1*

consequently exacerbate the social and economic difficulties already affecting Africa's small farmers.

Monsanto is evidently serious about ensuring that no-one saves their GM seed, and that farmers are forced to buy from them each season. The Center for Food Safety report "Monsanto vs Farmers" documents Monsanto's lawsuits against American farmers, revealing thousands of investigations, nearly 100 lawsuits and numerous bankruptcies.

"CFS found that Monsanto, the world's leading agricultural biotechnology company, has used heavy-handed investigations and ruthless prosecutions that have fundamentally changed the way many American farmers farm. The result has been nothing less than an assault on the foundations of farming practices and traditions that have endured for centuries in this country and millennia around the world, including one of the oldest, the right to save and replant crop seed."

According to CFS, "the largest recorded judgment made thus far in favor of Monsanto as a result of a farmer lawsuit is \$3,052,800.00. Total recorded judgments granted to Monsanto for lawsuits amount to \$15,253,602.82. Farmers have paid a mean of \$412,259.54 for cases with recorded judgments." However this does not tell the full story, as many farmers have chosen to settle out of court and pay Monsanto rather than undergo trial. They are obliged to sign confidentiality agreements - which mean they are forbidden to talk about their experiences.

As disturbing as this may already be, the implications for patented GM crops go further than just forbidden seed saving. When Monsanto patents a GM crop, they are actually patenting the gene from a different species which they have transferred into the crop (e.g. the pesticide-producing gene from a bacteria, which is inserted into maize and cotton, to make Bt maize and Bt cotton.) Should a GM crop cross-pollinate with a neighboring crop through the movement of wind, insects, birds, or accidental seed mixing, the neighbouring harvest would be likely to carry the patented gene also. Monsanto could then claim that the neighbouring farm has infringed their patent. The farmer who was unintentionally contaminated by somebody else's GM crop, would be breaking the law if he saved his seed and planted it.

There is a well-known case where a Canadian farmer's canola (oilseed rape) fields were accidentally contaminated by pollen from someone else's GM crops. Monsanto came onto his land to test his crops, and found that their patented gene had contaminated the canola that he had been developing for 50 years. They sued him. Percy Schmeiser is one of the few farmers who chose to fight his case in the courts, but according to Canadian patent law, he was found guilty of patent infringement, even though it was clear that there was nothing he could have done to prevent the contamination. Practically his only option to avoid breaking the law, was to stop growing his own seed, and buy Monsanto's GM seed himself.

North American law on patents and intellectual property rights is particularly favorable to Monsanto's interests, but currently not all African countries have similar patent and intellectual property laws on seed. This fact might, for a time, persuade African policymakers that they have nothing to fear. However, there is constant international pressure on countries to implement national IPR laws that are consistent with treaties such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), which allow for protection of seed companies' rights, but do not protect the rights of farmers to save seed.

South Africa is the only African country that currently allows GM crops to be grown commercially. Complementing their GMO Act (which has been criticized for facilitating GMO acceptance instead of implementing careful regulation), South Africa's patent laws protect

Monsanto's interests and forbids the saving of GM seeds. South African farmers growing GM crops must sign a "Technology Agreement" that signs away their rights to save seed. Even illiterate farmers have been signing these agreements, although there is doubt that many of them understand what they are agreeing to.

Other African countries are currently in the process of debating GM acceptance, and develop their Biosafety laws for GM crop regulation. Parallel to this, foreign companies and institutions are calling for IPR legislation. There is chance that given sufficient influence from industry, new laws may be developed that will make seed saving illegal.

One country that chose to accept GM crops, whilst refusing to adapt patent law to meet Monsanto's wishes, was Argentina. Monsanto's GM Roundup Ready Soya, developed to be resistant to Roundup herbicide, entered the Argentine market at a time when the country had decided to focus its agriculture towards soya for exports. By subsidizing the Roundup, not patenting the crops, and allowing extensive contamination, GM soya took over 95% of the soya market. The social costs of this takeover were considerable -the herbicide-resistant technology was favorable to the largest Agribusiness farms whose farms expanded to tens of thousands of hectares, while hundreds of thousands of farming families were forced off the land to become unemployed in the cities.

Once Monsanto controlled the nation's soya economy in this way, they threatened to cut off the seed supply if the Argentine government did not implement patent law, help Monsanto to recoup their royalties, make GM seed saving illegal, and put an end to the black market. A government proposal for a "Technology Compensation Fund" that would levy a charge on farmers selling their soybean harvests, in order to return the equivalent of the royalty charges to the GM Company, is currently stuck in Congress due to resistance from farming groups. Now Monsanto's new strategy is to block exports when ships carrying exported soybeans arrive in a different country, until their demands for royalty payments are met. Argentina is currently planning to take legal action against Monsanto as the company blocks soya shipments to Spain from reaching the European Union.

The case of Argentina can also serve as a warning to African countries about how GM agriculture can grant a single company extensive control over a country's food and seed supply. The fact that the Argentine government was willing to create the "Technology Compensation Fund" - essentially a new tax that would go directly into Monsanto's pocket - shows the political power that this control can afford.

Taken together, evidence suggests that GM companies like Monsanto and Syngenta are serious about enforcing their patent protection systems. They argue that they can only justify the many millions of dollars spent in developing GM crops, if they can ensure their continued profits. By patenting their seeds, charging high prices, and forbidding seed saving, they can certainly protect their own interests. But this will come at a heavy cost to farmers, particularly the poorest. Patented GM seeds present a significant threat to food security and livelihoods of the 80% of small farmers in Africa who use saved seed.

It is now time for policy makers to openly recognize and talk about the fact that GM crops are patented. They must consider whether such a system of agriculture will truly address the needs of the poor and hungry. Or will patented GM and illegal seed saving instead compromise Africa's food security, seed diversity, and the livelihoods of its farmers?

*The African Executive, 28 June 2006*  
<http://www.africanexecutive.com/modules/magazine/articles.php?article=766&magazine=76>

## WEDDING CAKE WITH THE HIDDEN POISON BIT GMO

By Ngugi Mutura, Executive Director, SACDEP

It is not an overstatement that Biotechnology is an age old technology with numerous benefits to human existence. It is a fact that farmers, brewers, bakers and other practitioners in life use Biotechnology as safe methods to improve lives.

The Research World has also had major Biotechnological breakthroughs in the manufacture of human and medicine. More and more findings are being made in different disciplines including Marker Gene Technology, Tissue culturing and related vegetative propagation techniques.

The fact is that crop breeding has a lot in hybridization and tissue culturing. These two can be termed as the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation to the title of 3<sup>rd</sup> generation technology. This is the POISON BIT.

A lot has been traded in the fact that Africa should not be left behind in Biotechnology. No one should let that happen. But let us be honest. Is everything in Biotechnology good for Africa? Yes. The Patent holders of Genetically Engineered (GE) plants will take you for a free lunch to convince you it is.

Simply put, GE is not a likely solution to African food security problems. In fact introducing GE may only add to the 10 reasons of food insecurity. GMOs are the 11<sup>th</sup> reason why Africa may get deeper into food insecurity. Upon accepting GMOs, the following may be experienced:-

- Farmers to pay patent rights to multinationals,
- Environmental damage of unknown proportions may occur. Human health may be compromised Crowded small holder regions will turn GMO without consent from unwilling farmers. Therefore families will in effect be forced to eat GMO food.
- Without food labeling as GMO consumers will be forced to eat GE foods.

- Without proper National Biosafety rules, the countries will be a playing field by GE Practitioners both local and foreign.

With all these unresolved issues, the push for GMOs is with unprecedented vigour. Kenyan scientists and academics have convinced themselves that without GE, no science makes sense. But rather than calling it GE proper, they call it Biotechnology.

When GE is presented with a coating of Biotechnology, then one says why you are challenging Biotechnology? But when one argues that remove GE and give me the rest, there is a quick retreat we are only researching.

Kenya has not even benefitted from the "wonders" of Green Revolution. Reasons are many. In came hybridization, Tissue culturing and other technologies. Still no full utilization and food insecurity persisted. Now, some people are rushing to GE even without asking the question, where is the hidden poison Bit?

In conclusion therefore, it is worth helping our scientists to stop being led by the nose. African Scientists should research for Africa but stop being a sole importer of foreign ideas.

GE technology should be removed from the sweetened jacket and icing of Biotechnology. It should be handled with the care, suspicion scientific and policy approach it deserves. When a contract has hidden clauses only protecting one, it is written in very small letters. Therefore, one signs without realizing that "the devil is in the details".

So, when our scientists have accepted to wed with foreign technological merchants, the wedding cake will be on offer. Upon eating, then the poison Bit will be swallowed without realizing and the damage may have irreversible damage. Is the African Scientist that easy going?

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### COMESA ENDORSES REGIONAL POLICY ON GMOs

Regional experts and stakeholders in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) have agreed to work together towards the adoption of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the region.

In a communiqué read at the end of a meeting in Nairobi Kenya in June, the experts recommended that commercial planting, trade and food aid on GMOs be centrally assessed in the region. Commercial trade of GM products should be driven by a directive from a central regional clearing house as a way of sharing information. The communiqué will be presented to relevant ministries in the 20-member states regional block.

Other suggestions include the development of a regional center of excellence in biotechnology and biosafety, and the formation of an experts' panel to provide technical advice on issues pertaining to the development, handling, and management of GMOs within the region.

COMESA's Senior Agricultural Advisor, Dr. Cris Muyunda, said that guidelines on food aid policy will also be developed at the regional level to help facilitate transit of food aid in neighboring states.

### WOMEN PLAY ROLE IN RESTORING DRYLANDS, IFAD

A new study by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) highlights the crucial role the world's rural women can play in restoring the world's drylands. The study, "Gender and Desertification: Expanding roles for women to restore drylands," was released in a recent United Nations conference.

The report highlights the role of women in managing natural resources, as well as the constraints they face while dealing with desertification. Because women have acquired extensive knowledge on managing natural resources through their daily work, they can be major agents of change in combating the phenomenon. The authors also note that women are often not given decision-making authority, and are thus excluded from dryland development projects.

About a third of the earth's land surface is threatened by the desertification, IFAD reports, threatening the survival of over one billion people in more than 100 countries. For more information, read the complete press release at.

[Knowledge.center@isaaa.org/http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=18678&Cr=ifad&Cr1=](mailto:Knowledge.center@isaaa.org/http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=18678&Cr=ifad&Cr1=)



## Fertilizers are not a solution to Africa's food shortages, IFOAM and PELUM Zambia

By Marjorie Chola Chonya, Information and Communications Officer, PELUM RD

**T**he International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and PELUM-Zambia questioned the purpose and goal of the Africa Fertilizer Summit that was held from June 9th - 13th in Abuja, Nigeria whose overall goal was to rapidly increase chemical and synthetic fertilizer use in Africa and creating an action plan for doing so.

According to a press statement that was released in Lusaka, PELUM Zambia and IFOAM felt that Africa's food problems can not be solved with the same kind of thinking that created them.

By disagreeing with the goals of the Fertilizer Summit which was organized by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), IFOAM and PELUM Association said they were by no means underestimating the current problems in agriculture on the African Continent.

On the contrary, the two organizations realized that over-exploitation of land and the introduction of chemical fertilizers and pesticides have provoked the establishment of a production system that increasingly attempts to exist independently of naturally regulated processes and local resources, and that is heavily dependent on nonrenewable resources.

As natural cycles are broken, this leads to an increase in the severity of pest and disease outbreaks and hinders effective soil nutrient management. To solve the problems this system creates, even more pesticides and chemical fertilizers have to be used, establishing a vicious cycle of dependency on fertilizers.

They suggested that instead of relying on external inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides, Organic Agriculture puts farmers at the center of the farming strategy, restoring the decision-making role to rural communities, guaranteeing the local control of resources and encouraging active participation in a value added food chain. Mineral fertilizers simply cannot be sustainable, as they are made from oil, a limited and increasingly costly resource. Currently, Zambian farmers produce yields of 4 to 5 tons of, maize per hectare using low external input agriculture i.e. compost, crop rotations, open pollinated varieties compared to an average of 1 ton of maize per hectare using industrial forms of production.

"Indeed, low soil fertility is a cause of Africa's food insecurity; however, it is certainly not the only cause. Social and economic determinants are at least as important, and will not be changed by using more fertilizer and putting farmers in more debt! The preoccupation with productivity per hectare ignores the increasing evidence that it is not supply factors, such as productivity per hectare, but demand factors, such as market opportunities, that determine agricultural development outcomes in Africa. Organic Agriculture offers local market opportunities as well as high quality export goods," IFOAM President, Gerald Hermann stated.

And Mwatima Abdulla Juma, IFOAM World Board member from Tanzania, advised that the causes of starvation are plenty, but only seldom are they related to the rate of agricultural productivity.

"Rather, developing countries are highly in debt and must

therefore export food, feed and other agricultural products (the so called "cash crops") to the wealthy countries of the northern hemisphere in order to generate income. Governments buying fertilizers simply act in the same way and add to their indebtedness even further," Juma advised.

Clement Chipokolo, Coordinator of PELUM Zambia noted that the corporate driven commercial industrial technologies that are used in agriculture today to feed the world are not inherently sustainable.

He argues that they have not worked well to promote either self-sufficiency or food security in developing countries like Zambia. Chipokolo warns that driving farmers to the use of fertilizers will only heighten the probability of food insecurity as very few of them can afford the product.

The two organisations called on the participants of the Summit including Jacques Diouf, Secretary General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Jimmy Carter, as well as to journalists, to broaden their view.

During the first day of the Africa Fertilizer Summit - June 9th - local movements around the continent organized press events to share their positive experiences with Organic Agriculture and to express their worries on the Summit.

On the other hand, agricultural experts, ministers and policymakers used the Summit to call on African governments to improve access to fertilisers across the continent. They also hoped for better access to fertilizer which they claimed would help solve food shortages in Africa.

Gary Toenniessen, director of food security at the Rockefeller Foundation, said that while too much fertilizer can be a problem, too little fertilizer is equally problematic, as it means soil nutrients are not replenished. This has depleted African soils, making them less able to sustain plant life and has led to increasing water scarcity and the spread of deserts. African agriculture ministers that attended the meeting are considered ways to make access to fertilizers easier and more affordable.

One resolution called on governments to declare fertilizer a strategic resource that is not taxed when it is imported or when it moves from one African country to another. Another called on the African Development Bank to provide loans to improve the transport infrastructure that is needed to get fertilizer to farmers.

"Fertilizer is a product that can make money," said Toenniessen. "Loans are very appropriate financial mechanisms as the supply chain that is put in place can end up paying back the loan."

According to Toenniessen, African farmers use on average eight kilograms of fertiliser per hectare of land each year, compared to 350 in China and 420 kilograms in Holland. The summit heard that 'microdosing' - placing the equivalent of a bottle cap of fertiliser near a plant - can improve yields, especially in the dry Sahel region directly south of the Sahara.

Toenniessen added that the summit would encourage Africa to produce more fertilizer itself, saying that the continent has an ample supply of the rock phosphate needed to make its phosphate component.

## UN Food Agency Deputy Resigns Over Leader's 'Culture of Silence'

**T**he United Nations body which combats world hunger was in turmoil on May 25th after one of its most senior officials resigned, claiming that her boss ruled through 'silence, rumour and fear'.

Louise Fresco, assistant director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), handed in her notice, angered at the way the agency was being run by its Senegalese director-general, Dr Jacques Diouf. In a scathing letter of resignation, which was been leaked to The Observer, she criticises him for the direction of the agency and its inability to offer the poorest countries proper advice on agriculture.

She wrote to Diouf: 'I am sad that you have isolated yourself so much from most senior managers. Combined with a lack of transparency in decision-making, you have stimulated a culture of silence, rumours and even fear.'

FAO deserves a reform, but a fundamental reform which does not limit itself to hastily moving units across departments or dispatching generalist decentralised teams. FAO needs visionary leadership to move itself out of its bureaucratic paralysis. But such leadership can only flourish if it builds on the commitment of all staff.

'We need to become an exemplary body, not only technically but also in our mode of operation: committed, compassionate and critical.'

The FAO was set up after the Second World War to help developing nations overcome food shortages by offering agriculture support and technical expertise, as well as framing policies which would allow them to compete against wealthier countries.

With a budget of \$765m this year, it aims to help improve the production, processing, marketing and distribution of food and agricultural products, and also to promote rural development. But there has been criticism that it relies too heavily on involvement from agribusiness, and does little to encourage independence and projects that would boost the nutritional levels of the poorest countries.

In January, Diouf was elected for a third term of office which upset many officials, according to one insider. In 2004, Diouf attracted huge protests from campaigners in more than 80 countries for an FAO report on biotechnology, which, his critics said, was a thinly-veiled attempt to support genetically engineered crops. They said the study failed to point out that it would

disadvantage the world's poorest farmers, and that one major company, Monsanto, dominated the market in genetically modified seeds.

One UN insider, who asked not to be named, said: 'There is a general perception that Diouf has done very little to work closely with other UN bodies. He seems keener to spend time with the US guys running multinational companies than he does to sort out problems on the ground. There have been tensions brewing over its lack of any clear strategy and they are coming to the surface now.'

According to Fresco's letter, 'there is no single cause that explains the crisis that has affected FAO for several years. The role of agriculture is changing, demands on our specialised expertise are growing and there is no doubt that we have a unique global role. But the organisation has been unable to adapt.'

She writes that the FAO is 'caught in a vicious circle' in which most countries appreciate its work for specific projects but do not like it as a whole. She adds that it has not been able to build coalitions and that its reputation is in decline. Unfortunately, its leadership has not proposed bold options to overcome this crisis.'

Fresco, who is leaving to take up a professorship at the University of Amsterdam after nine years at the FAO, said there had been no serious questioning of the organisation's direction and in particular the balance between the work it does in the field - working with the poorest countries to overcome their problems - and the more centralised research.

'Whatever is done now is too little and too late,' she writes. 'The current intent at reform does hardly anything to alleviate these problems..'

A spokesman for the FAO said last night that it could not comment on the contents of a private letter. The spokesman said: 'I understand that Louise Fresco has written a private letter to the D-G explaining her reasons for resigning but it was a private letter which has not been published.'

'My understanding is that she does not intend to make a public comment on this, and neither does Dr Diouf.'

**Article by Jo Revill, (The Observer. Date: 14 May 2006**  
<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/world/story/0,,1774642,00.html?gusrc=rss>

# PELUM Stand on GMOs

While the debate on GMOs is raging, it is good to remind ourselves of what PELUM has resolved itself to.

In 2004, PELUM set out to come up with a stand on GMOs and called upon the governments in the east, central and southern Africa to put in place a moratorium on GMOs and that during the moratorium the following needed to be done:

1. Promote a system of compulsory labeling, where people can exercise their right to choose products free of genetic engineering.
2. Increase public awareness and involvement in decisions on the need for and the regulation of Genetic Engineering in the region through biosafety mechanisms.
3. Prevent genetic pollution of the environment in the region.
4. Prevent and enforce strict legal liability for adverse effects on people or the environment from the release and marketing of genetically modified organisms in the region.
5. Carry out an independent assessment of implications of patenting genetic resources in the region.
6. Carry out an independent assessment of the social and economic impact of genetic engineering on farmers in the region.

On the other hand, PELUM committed itself to:

- a) Identify, and work closely and link-up with like-minded partners, civil society organizations (CSOs), and networks at local, national, regional and international

levels.

- b) Fight against food dumping in the region and especially GM food aid.
- c) Urge African governments especially those in east, central and southern Africa to ensure that Africa and the region remain free of GMOs.
- d) Participate in debate at local, national, regional and international levels to raise awareness on issues and expose the dangers posed by Genetic Engineering and Intellectual Property Rights.
- e) Urge African governments especially those in East, Central and Southern Africa to promote bio- diversity based agriculture that is in favor of small-scale farmers.
- f) Call upon African governments in particular those from east, central and southern Africa to speedily sign and ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biodiversity that upholds the rights of countries to restrict or ban GMOs based on its precautionary principle
- g) Call upon that the African governments to ratify and implement the Cartegena Protocol on Bio-Safety and adopt the African Model Law on Safety in Biotechnology; as agreed by Heads of African states in Maputo, Mozambique, July 2003.
- h) Call upon the African Union declaration on food and rural development of 2003 that was adopted by Southern African Development Community (SADC) in May 2004, calling for the increase up to 10% of countries' budgets for agricultural and rural development, be implemented by the governments in the region and be monitored by the people.

# Twelve reasons to reject GMOs

By Zachary Makanya, CDC, PELUM Kenya

The push to bring genetically modified (GM) crops into African agriculture is not letting up, even as (and partly because) the GM industry is faltering in much of the world. A growing list of organisations, networks and lobby groups with close ties to the GM industry are working to promote GM agriculture on the continent. GM crops are so far only commercially available in South Africa, but there have been field trials in Kenya, Egypt and Burkina Faso, and also in Senegal and Zimbabwe where there was no public knowledge or regulatory oversight. At least 12 African countries are carrying out research on GM crops, including Egypt, Uganda, Morocco, Nigeria, Tunisia and Cameroon, and a long list of GM crops are in the pipeline for introduction in various African countries. There is also concern that GM crops are coming in by way of food imports and seed smuggling, even for countries that have taken measures to prevent imports of GM food, such as Zambia, Angola, Sudan and Benin.

In short, Africa is in danger of becoming the dumping ground for the struggling GM industry and the laboratory for frustrated GM scientists. The proponents of GM technology sell a sweet message of GM crops as the second green revolution and the answer to African hunger, but the reality is quite different. A close look at GM crops and the context under which they are developed makes it clear that GM crops have no place in African agriculture. Here are twelve reasons why:

1. GM Crops will contaminate non-GM crops; co-existence is not possible.
2. GM crops will foster dependence on a corporate seed supply.
3. GM crops will usher in 'Terminator' and 'Traitor' technologies.
4. GM crops will increase the use of chemicals
5. GM crops are patented
6. GM crops favour industrial agriculture systems
7. GM crops threaten organic and sustainable farming.
8. The biosafety systems required are unrealistic for African countries
9. GM crops will not reduce hunger in Africa
10. GM crops will not resolve problems with pests
11. GM crops will encourage the arbitrary destruction of biodiversity
12. GM crops are a threat to human health

What is to be done?

Africa needs to apply the precautionary principle which advises to not proceed when there is no certainty for safety of health and the environment. Given Africa's constraints lack of resources for effective biosafety measures and lack of awareness about GM crops among the public and farmers in particular the only practical and appropriate position for African governments to take at present is to declare a moratorium on the commercialisation of GM crops.

This must be upheld until adequate research has been carried out into the different socio-economic, environmental, and agronomic issues surrounding GM crops and until there is enough public awareness for proper public consultations to be carried out. The right of African governments to make their own decisions should be respected by other countries.

This does not imply that African countries should put agricultural research on hold. To the contrary, African countries should enhance their investments in agricultural research.

But such investment must support farmer-driven research and it must focus on the specific and local problems that affect farming communities.

It is time for African governments and their development partners to address the root causes of poverty and food insecurity. In line with this, much more can be done to support:

- a) fair trade and improved food processing and marketing systems,
- b) improved rural infrastructure,
- c) farmer-friendly credit schemes,
- d) low cost irrigation systems,
- e) rural training to sharpen the skills of local farmers in food production and food processing,
- f) rangeland management.

Only Africans can provide African solutions to African problems. Outsiders may help, but the insiders, those who are affected, must do the job.

The best way to bring about sustainable development is to strengthen existing local production systems, while protecting them from such threats as GM crops.



## Homestead gardens; Care South Africa-Lesotho shares

Recurrent food insecurity is one of the biggest problems that the sub-Saharan Africa faces. A number of reasons have been advanced for this situation and many more attempts have been made to reverse the situation or cushion the impact of the food insecurity on livelihoods.



Since 2002, the Lesotho Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, South Africa-Lesotho and other non-governmental organizations have endeavored to improve the livelihood security of vulnerable rural households by increasing awareness of the prevailing vulnerability, influencing policy through practical interventions and building productive agricultural assets that have a short term impact on food security while addressing some of the chronic, underlying causes.

Through the implementation of the Livelihoods Recovery through Agriculture Programme (LRAP), spearheaded by Care South Africa-Lesotho, research studies on the causes of food insecurity in Lesotho were done, policy recommendations submitted and practical homestead vegetable gardening embarked on.

On February 17th 2006, a regional meeting to show case this project was arranged in Pretoria, South Africa, where various stakeholders in the project and representatives from the regional organizations working on food security and HIV/AIDS mainstreaming in the region, were invited.

At this meeting, it was learnt that LRAP's delivery target of reaching 7,404 beneficiaries in 1,234 households to produce vegetables in homestead gardens has been achieved by 75% (7,404 beneficiaries in 1,234 households). This was mainly achieved through the involvement of various non-governmental organizations most of whom are members of PELUM Lesotho including Lesotho Council of NGOs, Rural Self-Reliance Development Association, TEBA, Machobane Farming System, GROW, Lesotho Youth Volunteer Services and Catholic Relief Services.

And admitting the successful partnership in the project, the Lesotho Minister of Agriculture and food Security, Prof. Phororo, who officiated at the meeting said "the collective effort in LRAP generated a mini 'green revolution' in the 'kingdom in the sky' as at no time in Lesotho's history have homesteads been studded with so many green plots of vegetables produced throughout the year. Noting that all this has been achieved in drought years, the Minister admitted that the project was "an achievement to be proud of".

In addition, low cost systems of water conservation were used in ensuring that the water for irrigation was available for the households. And in order to ensure even the poor and vulnerable households benefit from LRAP, promoting the use of comparatively cost-effective manure and compost instead of chemical fertilizers was successfully done.

And to enhance the nutritional dimension of the programme, the LRAP partners integrated the easily managed improved indigenous poultry (likoekoe) production in the programme system. This diversification provided the manure for vegetable production.

"The integrated vegetable/poultry production at household level has been successful in providing the family with greens, eggs and meat. Hitherto, these food items were not accessible to the poor and thus LRAP is making a valuable contribution in enabling families to be food secure but, most importantly, in the fight against HIV and Aids with the nutrition weapon," Prof. Phororo emphasized.

The project also took into account HIV/AIDS and gender mainstreaming by carefully thinking about who the project would benefit both on long term and short term basis.

As the LRAP lessons were unfolding, it was clear to the participants that LRAP had fundamental lessons that other development organizations could learn from. May be not in exact terms and practice but certainly there are a few ideas that can be borrowed and modified to suit each situation in the region.

Homestead gardening was an important aspect of this programme that can be learnt from because at least most households have space on residential plots that could be used, with little labour consumed, while vegetables produce nutrients necessary for human survival and they can also be a source of income when produced in excess for sale.

As Prof Phororo emphasised LRAP played an important role in empowering households to be self-reliant in fighting hunger and HIV/AIDS. He challenged countries in the regional to be creative and devise approaches, strategies and systems of how poor landholders can be brought into economic development stream to achieve food security objectives at household and national level through applying labour and sweat. He brought participants to the attention that globally MDGs have been delineated to achieve this goal of poverty reduction.





# Governments pledge to implement reforms that benefit the poor

In March 2006, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) organised an International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural development (ICARRD) in Porto Alegre, Brazil. At the conference governments committed themselves to promote agrarian reform and advance rural development policies that benefit the poor and marginalized.

The governments also admitted that land and access to natural resources are the foundation of sustainable rural development and cultural and environmental viability and pledged to undertake national and inclusive dialogue to ensure progress on agrarian reform and rural development.

approach based on economic, social and cultural rights as well as good governance for the equitable management of land, water, forests and other natural resources.

Support to applied research, technology development and transfer to meet the needs of all farmers, especially women and poor farmers was also given as one of the important areas that needed governments' intervention.

The ICARRD delegates called for the strengthening of the role of the state in developing and implementing just and people centred development policies and programmes to ensure food security and well being of all citizens especially aimed at addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS and other disease on rural communities and livelihoods.

On information exchange, governments pledged support for local knowledge and experiences, assuring availability and effective access by traditional and family agriculture and other smallholder producers to adequate information and technologies for production, income diversification, enhanced market linkages at all levels giving priority to local and national markets.

These pledges by our governments are certainly welcome and eye-catching, but the question most people would want to ask is whether our governments will truly fulfil their commitments given the past experiences were adherence to the commitments is very low.

But while this may be so, it is up to PELUM and other organisations involved in advocacy to keep reminding governments to live up to their pledges and the majority's expectations.

Most farmers are tired of politicking and especially at international levels and action should be seen at local level.

Otherwise accusations that states and the international community are not doing enough to defeat poverty in the world will continue. For the complete version of the delegates final declaration, go to [www.icarrd.org](http://www.icarrd.org).



They particularly agreed to establish appropriate agrarian reform mainly in areas with strong social disparities, poverty and food insecurity as a means to broaden sustainable access and control over land and related resources.

"This should be achieved through a programme based on coherent, ethical, participatory and integrated policies which aim at achieving overall efficiency of the productive systems, optimising agricultural productivity, increasing employment opportunities and well being of the people to make rural development truly effective and equitable," the final declaration made by the delegates read in part.

The delegates also pledged to support a participatory

## YARD WORK - AS VIEWED FROM HEAVEN

(overheard in a conversation between God and St. Francis):

God: Francis, you know all about gardens and nature; what in the world is going on down there in the U.S.? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistles and the stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought, and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long-lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honeybees, and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colour by now. All I see are patches of green.

St. Francis: It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. They are called the Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers "weeds" and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

God: Grass? But it is so boring, it's not colourful. It doesn't attract butterflies, bees or birds, only grubs and sod worms. It's temperamental with temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want grass growing there?

St. Francis: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it has grown a little, they cut it....sometimes two times a week.

God: They cut it? Do they bale it like hay?

St. Francis: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

God: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

St. Francis: No sir, just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

God: Now let me get this straight...they fertilize it to make it grow and when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

St. Francis: Yes, sir.

God: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we

cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

St. Francis: You aren't going to believe this Lord, but when the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

God: What nonsense! At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep the moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus, as they rot, the leaves become compost to enhance the soil. It's a natural circle of life.

St. Francis: You'd better sit down, Lord. As soon as the leaves fall, the Suburbanites rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

God: No way! What do they do to protect the shrubs and tree roots in the winter to keep the soil moist and loose?

St Francis: After throwing the leaves away, they go out and buy something called mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

God: And where do they get this mulch?

St. Francis: They cut down the trees and grind them up to make mulch.

God: Enough! I don't want to think about this anymore. Saint Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?

St. Catherine: "Dumb and Dumber," Lord. It's a really stupid movie about....

God: Never mind—I think I just heard the whole story from Saint

## Progress

### 1. The Rule of Progress

Everything has its ups and downs. Unlike light, nothing else travels in straight lines. This applies to the progress in any project. Keep your eye on the target; keep on putting more efforts and you will reach your target, however far it may be!

Successful people realize that they reach their goals by continuously reviewing and correcting. We all get off-course. The solution is to review, correct and get back on course.

Ships do it, Missiles and Rockets do it, and people too, should do it. The golden rule is to review, correct and move on and you will be home!

### 2. The Rule of Falling and Failure

To fall to the ground is not failing but to remain on the ground after falling is the sure road to absolute failure and certain death.

We welcome the following new members of staff to PELUM Association:

Mr. Stephen Mwaura - PELUM Kenya  
Ms. Stella Lutalo - PELUM Uganda  
Ms. Mary Mmari - PELUM Tanzania  
Mr. Tette Kasanduku - PELUM Tanzania  
Mr. Emmanuel Kamangira - PELUM Zambia

We also wish to bid farewell to Emily Drani, who until June 30th was Desk Coordinator for PELUM Uganda. We wish her well wherever she will be.

This bulletin is produced by the PELUM Association Regional Desk in Lusaka. For more information please get in touch.

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