



Peasant's Collective for Food Justice

Anti-GMOs Forum



St. Andrews Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA)

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Abbreviations

CIN: Consumer Information Network

GMOs: Genetically Modified Organisms

MNCs: Multinational Corporations

SACDEP: Sustainable Agriculture Community Development Programme

WEMA: Water Efficient Maize for Africa

Background

The Workshop brought together a minimum of 174 participants drawn from social movements, peasant farmers, university students and consumers.

Organizations represented included: Fahamu, Sustainable Agriculture Community Development Programme (SACDEP), Bunge la Mwananchi, Bunge la Wamama Mashinani (BLW), Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution (CIC), Kenya Small Scale Farmers Association, Ibon International-Africa, Kwa Heri Small Scale Farmers Association, Consumer Information Network (CIN) and students drawn from various institutions including University of Nairobi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) Technical University of Kenya and Kenyatta University among others.

The focus of the workshop was deliberations on GMOs including lifting of the GMOs ban and importation of Bt Maize into the country. From Fahamu's perspective, the discussions was aimed at enabling:

- i) Enhanced collaboration amongst stakeholders for cross learning and organizing aimed at improving the systems and structures that relate to food production
- ii) Build alliances among grassroots communities for sustained dialogues on food and other injustices

Ice breaking and Introductions

The session started with a round of introduction and exploring reasons as to why different groups of people and networks were present in the space. Reasons given were:

- GMOs have chemicals that are likely to cause cancer
- Being affected as a consumer
- GMOs are likely to affect farmers
- GMOs will lead to the destruction of our indigenous seeds
- GMOs is likened to neo-colonialism
- As farmers, students, consumers, everyone is likely to be affected
- To better understand what GMOs are
- The imminent lifting of GMO ban as had been announced by Deputy President William Ruto

The Food Question

To locate GMOs, the participants were asked to respond to various questions, which touched on food consumption and access as follows:

- What did you eat in the morning?
- Where did you get the food?
- How many have ever gotten sick as a result of food?
- How many have ever worked on land as a source of livelihood?
- How many depend on farming as a source of livelihood?

Defining GMOs

GMOs were defined as a process organisms (plants /animals/insects) whose genes have been altered. It was mentioned that GMOs is likely to have adverse effects on human beings.

Locating the History of GMOs

It was deliberated that Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in Kenya are the ones pushing for GMOs. It was further discussed that Africa was the primary producer of agricultural products and raw materials because the West made it difficult for Africa to process her own raw materials because of lack of industries. Examples

were given of Nigeria despite being amongst the leading producer of oil, has to import processed oil from Shell BP.

The introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPS) was shared as the origin of reduced government responsibility on provision of basic services including water and education. Economically SAPs were shared to have led to removal of subsidies for farmers hence resources and services such as Agricultural extension officers no longer provided services, purchasing of seeds became more expensive. On the other hand, it was mentioned that as the developed countries pushed for African nations to open their markets (market liberalization), developing nations continue to provide basic services including subsidies to their farmers to cushion them from weather related losses.



Defining GMOs and its effects

GMOs and health

On health, it was mentioned that the Bt used in GMOs affects health and

was likely to result into cancers. It was further noted that farmers in countries such as India working in cotton field reported irritation of their skin and this is attributed to but cotton.

It was further shared that that GMOs ingested, as food would affect sexual and reproductive health of both men and women such as libido and menstruation.

GMOs impacts on Reproductive Health for Women

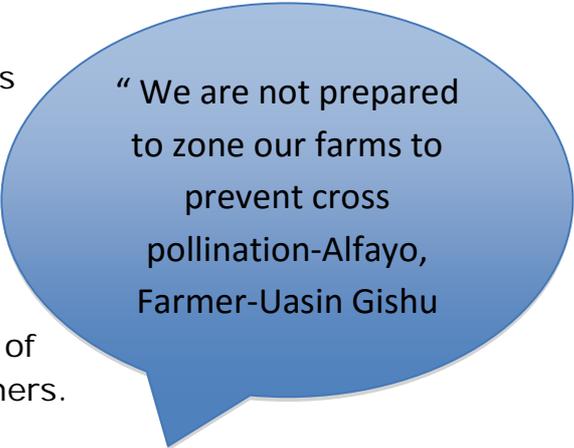
In addition, it was discussed that children would consume GM products from their mothers as breast-milk, it was noted that a baby's immune system is weak and this was therefore placing infants at a greater risk of developing cancerous diseases.

GMOs and farmers

It was deliberated that lifting of the GMO ban would result into farmers being forced to buy certified seeds, which cannot be replanted year after year.

It was further said noted that the push for GMOs would result into criminalization of indigenous seeds, where farmers would be forced to buy certified seeds from designated agrovets.

On pollination, it was observed that in Kenya as in most of Sub-Saharan Africa, bee's carry out pollination and other insects and the bulk of African farmers are peasant farmers. GMOs due to toxicity would kill bees and farmers would have no insects to pollinate their crops. The Crops Act was mentioned is a strategy of criminalizing seed banking amongst peasant farmers.



“ We are not prepared to zone our farms to prevent cross pollination-Alfayo, Farmer-Uasin Gishu



A farmer sharing his views on GMOs

Based on the deliberations, the following observations were noted:

- There is a lot of hype about agri-business
- GMOs is a war and communities should actively and persistently resist
- GMO is a chain between the farmer, the consumer, artists, students and other stakeholders
- Everyone of us is united by food
- The other people who should be present in the GMOs deliberations but are missing from the debates to hear citizen's views are the Kenyan Vice President and the Cabinet Secretary (CS) Ministry of Agriculture.

Perspectives on the GMOs Debate

Different people and networks had divergent views on how lifting of the ban on GMOs and BT maize importation would affect them including what they were already observing within their communities.

“ GMOs are a wrong importation to this country- University Student, Nairobi

From the artiste's perspective, GMOs was seen as a form of exploitation and control aimed at making companies in the West richer at the expense of Africans. The push for GMOs was further reflected as a conspiracy among elites (politicians and Transnational Corporations (TNCs)).



GMOs -perspectives from an artiste

From Bunge la Mwananchi (the People's Parliament), it was shared that they the movement had Carried out previous activism on GMOs, the first one being in 2008. In addition, it was mentioned that as consumers in Kenya, communities had a right to safe food, which was of High quality.

It was observed that introduction of GMOs would go contrary to Constitutional provisions as no tests had been done on human beings.

It was further mentioned that the current push for GMO in Kenya while in other countries were banning GMOs such as Germany was and was something that needed further analysis given that these were countries with advanced research systems compared to what existed in Kenya.

The genesis of food related protests were shared as Unga Revolution¹, which started in 2011 with clarion calls such as "*Hatutaki sumu tunataka Unga*". It was emphasized that the Constitution recognizes the right to food, which must be of high quality and acceptable. It was shared that GMO food were being touted as drought resistant, water resistant such

¹ Organized in 2011 by Bunge la Mwananchi alongside other movements, as a protest to counter the strain of rising food and fuel prices.

as the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA). It was observed based on research that rats given GM food had their lives expanding and developed cancers and if rats could develop cancer, how adverse would the effects be on human beings?



**GMOs from
Social
Movements
Perspectives-
Bunge la
Mwananchi**

It was mentioned that patenting of seeds by Monsanto and the likes would result into higher expenses for farmers and arrests by farmers (who mainly depend on wind, bees and butterflies for pollination) who will be found to have GM crops without authorization from the Multinationals producing GM food. Examples of farmers being sued by Monsanto due to being found with GM food on their land without having acquired them from Monsanto were

given from the USA as lived realities of the complexities of GM food and that seed inspectors would be visiting farmers and monitoring whether they had GM foods without authorization.

It was further mentioned that in the USA, maize was not consumed as a staple food and that the amount of toxins in the maize consumed as staple food for Kenyans was bound to be higher as primary consumers.

My grandfather is a very old man and a strict vegetarian, what will happen to him with the advent of GMOs? - Resident, Kangemi, Nairobi

To be higher and would have adverse health effects. On the push for acceptance of GMOs it was mentioned that the government had hired professors resulting into the subsequent pressure to accept GMOs, a lot of adverts in the media had also been observed citing GMOs as safe. It was additionally mentioned that many Kenyans are

unaware of what GMOs are and the need to create awareness amongst communities on what exactly GMOs are.

GMOs and Food Security

It was shared that GMOs is bacteria and there is never going to be a situation where bacteria would be nutritious to human beings. It was mentioned that protesting against GMOs was protecting our food sovereignty. It was noted that Genetic Engineering is about accelerated development of resistance among insects and pests towards BT toxins and this would cause increased resistance to antibiotics including reducing immunity just like in the case of HIV/AIDs.



**Sharing on
GMOs and
health of the
elderly**

On the rationale for resistance to GMOs in Kenya, it was shared that given the adverse effects of GMOs across various entities (peasant farmers, consumers, households) etc., there was need to resist the GMOs in Kenya as it was founded on global corporate capture of food which made the developed nations richer and kept Africa as economic slaves.



Deliberations on necessity for resistance to GMOs

It was further mentioned that GMOs has resulted into debt bondage for farmers since it is capital intensive, farmers are forced to borrow from banks and other financial institutions, it was shared that there are documented cases in India of farmers committing suicide because they cannot pay debts .For other farmers, deepening poverty was observed and this was as a result of having to buy seeds and fertilizers at high prices year in year out, this being a phenomenon not only present in Kenya but in the rest of Africa.

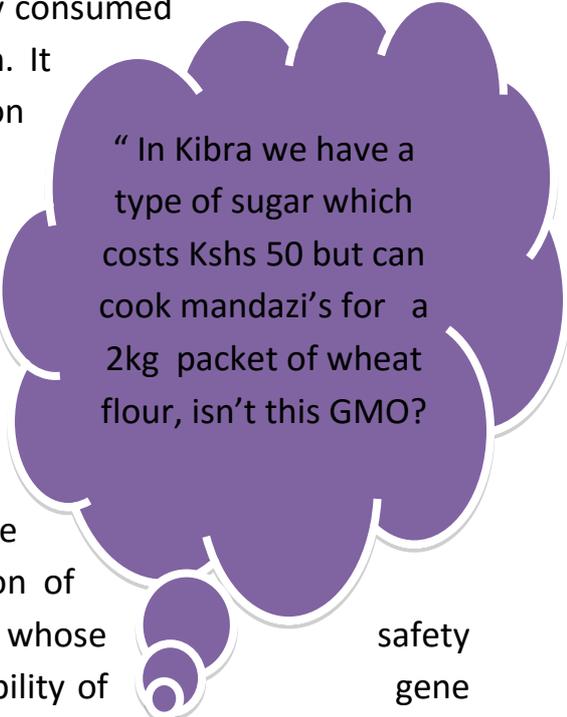
GMOs and Consumer Rights

It was observed that Kenya is one of the few countries in Africa whose constitution has a provision for consumer rights. Article 46 of the Kenyan Constitution was cited as protecting the consumers rights to food including right to get full benefits of information and services, right to compensation and access to basic needs including access to good and services of reasonable quality.

GMOs were mentioned to go contrary to the provisions of the Constitution in that information about GMOs have not been publicized including the would be adverse health effects. Furthermore, gaps identified included labeling of GMOs food of which is a consumer right to choice. Labeling would enable consumers make informed decisions on whether to consume GMOs products or not.

It was noted that the push for GMOs went against the right to compensation in that adequate research on GMOs had not been done and the Kenyan legal framework was unclear on how consumers could be compensated if they consumed GM food and had n dangerous impacts on their health. It was further deliberated that GMOs were being forced on Kenyans by being touted as a solution to food crisis.

It was observed that GMOs in many cases is given as food aid during crisis especially to areas such as Northern Kenya where in actual sense a lot of maize is rotting in areas such as Kitale .The push for GM food was thus seen as a for corporate profit maximization.



“ In Kibra we have a type of sugar which costs Kshs 50 but can cook mandazi’s for a 2kg packet of wheat flour, isn’t this GMO?

The safety of GMOs was also questioned in that the process of developing GM products is through insertion of genes, which may be either, or insects or bacteria, of whose nobody is sure of. It was also mentioned that the possibility of mutation in such cases was high which might result into adverse health impacts to human beings.

The right to compensation is a key issue that has not been considered by the GMOs furthermore, it was noted that Kenyan law has not put out clearly how one can get compensated when they consume GMOs.



GMOs and Consumer Rights –Consumer Information Network (CIN)



Experiences on household food safety and GMOs-perspectives from Kibra

Connecting Climate Change and GMOs

On climate change and GMOs, it was shared that Bt maize and drought resistant sorghum had been proposed as solutions to climate change and food insecurity in Africa, however it was noted that Bt maize is a combination of DNA of maize stock borer mixed with maize DNA, which is not a natural reproductive process. It was further mentioned that GMO seeds were being introduced as solutions to climate change because of falling levels of rainfall. In addition, it was shared that GMO maize have a terminator gene, which cannot be re-planted the next year.

It was further discussed that companies producing GM seeds such as Syngenta and Monsanto have patented seeds and are also responsible for the production of fertilizers, which deplete soil fertility.



How can we sensitize communities in the rural areas on GMOs ,Roundup fertilizer has already reached western Kenya and its burning grass on farms- Community member, Western , Western Kenya

Emerging Questions and Plenary Comments



i). What are the side effects of GMOs?

GMOs cause cancers, reproductive health problems. Socially and economically, MOs are lead to farmers sinking further into poverty, suicides not forgetting that it makes the Multinationals grow richer. Furthermore, people are getting killed because of their stand on GMOs

ii) What is the next step apart from holding a demonstration against GMOs?

The resistance to GMOs should be an on-going process; other avenues are being explored including the courts

“ We do not have a food crisis in Kenya, -Farmer from Central Kenya Region

Message Development for the Anti –GMOs Demonstrations

Ask to deliberate on what key messages they wished to pass to government on GMOs, the participants had the following:

- No to GMOs
- GMOs=Cancer
- GMOs=Death
- Ruto Must Go
- Monsanto Don't Come to Kenya
- When will mama *Mboga*² speak about her challenges?
- GMOs you are null and void
- Get Monsanto Out
- Pro-Organic Kenya
- Say No to Monsanto
- Hatutaki³ GMOs , Hatutaki Cancer
- Monsanto No
- Kenya is not a Hotbed of GMOs , Kenya is a Hot Bed of Organic Food

Activities to be done were shared as :

- Naming and shaming of people promoting GMOs
- Burning of effigies of personalities responsible for the GMO push
- The government to indicate price differentials on GMO and non GMO products

² Mboga is a Swahili collective name for vegetables

³ Hatutaki is a Swahili word meaning we don't want



Message generation for the Anti-GMOs Campaign



Anti GMOs messaging

Moving forward

The participants had the following to say:

- There is need to visit markets and sensitize consumers and farmers about GMOs
- There is need to reach out to rural communities to create awareness on GMOs as the bulk of our food comes from rural areas.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that the forum achieved its objectives; issues affecting farmers and consumers with regards to food were discussed including new alliances on food justice formed.



Cross Section of participants

