

Event “With food sovereignty, Without transgenes” País Vasco, (Spain) March, 2008



WITH FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, WITHOUT TRANSGENES. STRATEGY DESIGN AND COORDINATION

An event to design and coordinate strategy and action in GM-free food and farming campaigns will take place 15th and 16th March, 2008. The event is designed specifically for all Iberian Peninsula civil society movements that oppose farm-food genetic engineering and for all food producer organizations worldwide (farmers, indigenous communities, fisherfolk, urban allotment holders...). The event is a joint initiative, promoted initially by the Basque Farmers' Union EHNE, Vía Campesina, and the Iberian groups Greenpeace, GRAIN, Friends of the Earth, Ecologistas en Acción, the “Rsembrando e Intercambiando” Seed Network, COAG and EntrePueblos. The event will take place in the Basque Country (Spain).

The initiative is being organized in a key moment in the struggle for food sovereignty and against the use of genetically modified organisms in farming and food:

- public opposition to transgene food has been firm during recent years despite the enormous pressure being applied by the genetic engineering industry and by the pro-GM attitudes and actions of many governments around the Globe. A growing body of scientific and economic information supports public opposition.
- Specifically in the European Union a clear and growing split can be observed between numerous regional and Member State governments and the European Commission's pro-GM stance, with different Member States introducing moratoria to given GM varieties. The EU Commissioner for the Environment proposes rejecting new GM maize varieties, at a time in which sowing GM varieties already in the market such as those derived from MON810 is in fact illegal, these varieties not having completed obligatory approval renewal as enshrined in law. We are but a step away from a GM crop-free Europe, a step that would have a huge positive impact on the struggle for a GM-free world.
- In the European context, the biggest area sown with GM-varieties is still in the Iberian Peninsula and thus the strategies adopted by local civil society movements are of key importance to the GM-free movement.

The March event is based upon the following principles:

1. The need to guarantee GM-free farming and food, both organic and conventional/traditional
2. Zero tolerance of GM contamination in all farm and food activities and products
3. The impossibility of coexistence between GM and non-GM farm and food production systems
4. The right to both food sovereignty and the use and conservation of biodiversity by food producing communities, rights which are incompatible with GM farming and food.

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The basic objective of this event is to analyse and articulate common strategies to both further the objectives of the organizations taking part and guarantee the four basic principles outlined above. The idea is to share information and facilitate the existence of a strong, clear voice in the GM-free farm and food movement in both farmers' and Iberian Peninsula movements.

The event would consider the following issues:

1. How to maintain, promote and/or recover GM-free farming and food systems:
 - a. implications for crops with GM varieties on the market or contaminating non-GM crops
 - b. implications for animal feedstuffs: GM-free animal feedstuff in the context of local feedstuff supplies. (GM-free soy and maize is just one first step).
 - c. the importance of local farm seed varieties and their control by local food producers for GM-free farming
 - d. the importance of responsible food consumption: local markets, consumer habits, GM-free food...
 - e. the role of GM-free declarations
 - f. the role of the both WTO and, specifically for the EU countries, of CAP reform for GM-free farming
 - g. Existing legislation that hinders or helps GM-free farming and food
2. The special role of women in guaranteeing both GM-free farming and food.
3. New challenges that face the GM-free movement: mutagenics, nanotechnology, synthetic biology, terminator, patents, climate change, agrofuels...

It is stressed that in all cases the main objective is to identify and organise strategies for campaigns.

The event is open to all food producer organizations worldwide (farmers, indigenous communities, fisherfolk, urban allotment holders...) and to all Iberian Peninsula civil society movements, in both cases to those organizations that agree with the above-mentioned common principles. These principles constitute the starting point of all the debates on common strategies that will take place during the event.

The event will place most emphasis on work groups, with only short introductory plenary sessions and follow on plenary sessions after each block of work groups for common consideration of proposals and conclusions.

In January 2008 further information will become available on the websites of the organisations promoting this event, information regarding the themes and work methodology of each work group, how to register and request more information,

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information on travel and accommodation logistics, etc. Additionally, in January, there will be confirmation concerning a proposed farmer seed event to take place the day before the main event itself.

