

MILITANT PEASANT GROUP ACCUSES IRRI OF THEFT, DEMANDS RIGHT TO LAND AND LIFE

The militant Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, together with members of the International Alliance Against Agrochemical TNCs (IAAATNCs) and other genetic-conservationist and environmental groups, launched a protest action in front of the International Rice Research Institute in Los Baños, Laguna today to condemn IRRI and the United States' attempt to genetically engineer Thai Jasmine rice for a rice patent through US private breeders.

The KMP condemned IRRI for its latest crime against the peasants and the people for allowing US rice breeders to take Thai Jasmine Rice seeds without signing the Material Transfer Agreement (MTA). This was done in order to genetically engineer the seed and secure rice patent for it.

Adapting the term "genetic imperialism" to characterize the monopoly of genetic engineering and modern biotechnology by Gene Giants at the expense of poor farmers, Rafael Mariano, KMP National Chairperson, again lambasted IRRI, the US and proponents of genetically engineered seeds and organisms for pushing poor peasants and the people in the verge of poverty, hunger and further exploitation.

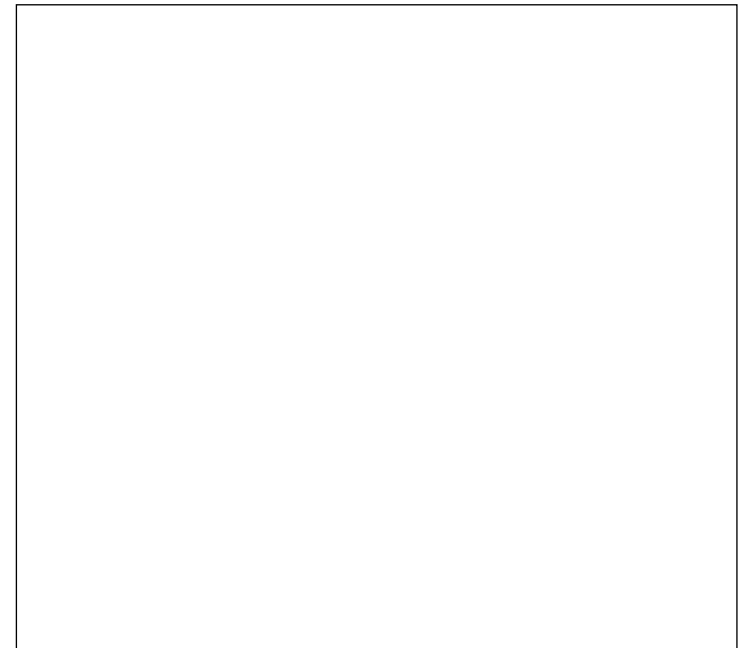
"The claims of agricultural modern biotechnology that their products are needed to feed the world are as nauseating as the crops they grow. The real causes of hunger are poverty, inequality and lack of land and food. Too many people are too poor to buy

food. Now they want us to eat genetically-engineered food - still hot, straight from their laboratories." Mariano stated.

KMP stated that IRRI's move is a clear indication of theft or biopiracy and the taking away of the Thai Jasmine rice seed from its main producer shows how easily transnational biotechnology companies steal people's lives and livelihood. The group also showed that for many years now, modern biotech companies are targeting the most vulnerable: the small and landless peasants in the Third World - with IRRI as one of their main instrument and implementor in their own Dirty Tricks Department.

Reiterating their stand that they are not anti-science nor anti-technology, KMP added that new developments in genetic engineering will give rise to further monopolization of the business. Many of these developments they say are explicitly aimed at increasing farmers' dependency on seeds and other farm inputs.

"Genetically-altered seeds seriously threaten livelihoods of 1.4 billion people who depend on farm-saved seeds and who produce almost 20 percent of the world's food. Gene giants drive the farmers' dependency to the limit. Their monopoly position will ensure that there is no escape. While their crops are hooked on expensive chemicals, farmers will be forced into addiction to credit - at the expense of their freedom and the survival of their families." Mariano added.



"A genuine national industrialization can only be achieved through genuine agrarian reform - free from exploitation and foreign monopoly control that has tied us into hundreds of years of feudal bondage. What IRRI and these modern biotech and agrochemical transnational companies are doing is a clear violation of our right for land and food without poisons." Mariano concluded.

Meanwhile, Verapon Sopa of the Assembly of the Poor in Thailand castigated the US and US scientists and researchers for the latest attempt to take control of Thai farm production system and the farmers' livelihood. "This move amounts to a loss in our own sovereignty. Rice is our life. You take it away from us, you take away our right to live." Sopa stated.

INSIDE

- 2 ... Church continues Battle vs GM foods
- 3 ... Only Monsanto will profit from Bt Corn
- 4 ... Jasmine Rice Mob Pictures

CHURCH CONTINUES BATTLE vs. GENETICALLY-MODIFIED FOOD

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PDI Northern Luzon Bureau
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ILAGAN, Isabela — The war over genetically modified organism (GMO)-laced crops and coal mining in Isabela is far from over.

Roman Catholic Church leaders led by Bishop Sergio Utleg of the Diocese of Ilagan and priests in 35 towns and two cities in the province renewed their campaign against Bt-corn farming and coal mining.

In a pastoral letter read during last Sunday's Mass in churches in the province, Utleg said Bt-corn farming and coal mining have been denying the blessings of life for millions of people.

The church is not against development and modern technology. Rather, we want to ask our people and leaders: For whom is development? Who is to benefit from these so-called development projects and modern technology? Development must serve the needs and promote the progress of all people, Utleg said.

Fr. Gregorio Uanan, chancellor of the Diocese of Ilagan and leader of the Anti-GMO Multi-Sectoral Alliance of Isabela, assailed the Monsanto-Philippines for disclosing that Bt-corn has recorded a high yield in its field tests in Alinguigan 2nd in Ilagan, Carulay in Echague town, and Villaluna in Cauayan.

Monsanto is the leading proponent of Bt-corn field tests in the country.

"Naturally, it has a high yield at first . . . but eventually the corn borer gets immuned, as researches say, and farmers would end up losing income," Uanan told the INQUIRER.

Dr. Arnold Estrada, Monsanto-Philippines product development manager, has reported a very high yield in its field

trials, a better output than what was recorded in General Santos City.

The tests, Estrada said, were proven to be a success as the firm has confirmed the resistance of Yieldgard corn against Asiatic corn borer and evaluated the corns economic value and better grain quality.

He said Monsanto would not debate with church leaders. He maintained, however, that Bt-corn has been proven safe after thorough testing for toxicity, nutritional values and feed values.

Official studies conducted by the US Department of Agriculture, the US Department of Environment and Protection, and the US Food and Drugs Administration have shown that Bt-corn has no adverse effects on peoples health and environment, Estrada said.

Utleg said Bt-corn does not promote the general welfare of the people nor solve the problem of poverty.

There are credible scientists who tell us that it is toxic and that it can contaminate other corn varieties through cross-pollination, he said.

Estrada, however, said the cross-pollination of Bt-corn plants with ordinary corn does not contaminate the plants.

The Catholic Church has accused Monsanto, a United States-based agricultural company, of trying to impose a monopoly of the corn industry throughout the world.

The solution to poverty and low productivity is genuine land reform and nationalist industrialization, Utleg said.

He called on legislators to pass a law outlawing Bt-corn field trials.

Only Monsanto Will Profit From Genetic Corn - KMP

The militant Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) lambasted the agrochemical transnational corporation (TNC), Monsanto Philippines, doing field trials of genetically engineered (GE) corn plants in the country for saying that “the technology offers a lot of benefits to farmers.”

KMP Chair Rafael Mariano said, “only Monsanto will profit from the commercialization of the *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) corn. Their patented ownership of the GE seed will further strengthen their monopoly control on the corn seed market in the country and Asia.”

Monsanto said that its multi-location trials recorded an average of 40% yield advantage compared to the traditional hybrid corn lines due to its resistance to the Asiatic corn borer pest. But the KMP said that high yield and the corn borer is not a problem for corn planters.

“High yield is not a major problem for corn planters. Thousands of metric tons of farmers’ produce is rotting in warehouses in Isabela, Bicol and Mindanao due to very low cost of farmgate price and the flooding of cheaper imported corn in our local market due to the governments’ full-scale liberalization policy in agriculture,” Mariano stressed.

He added that “the additional 40% average yield of the Bt

corn can not resolve the primary problems faced by farmers which are the high cost of production, price manipulation of farm produce during harvest, concentration of lands to plantations engaged in export crop production, usury and other forms of semi-feudal exploitation.”

Mariano also mentioned that scientists and researches say the Asiatic corn borer will eventually get immuned from the insecticide genes injected to the Bt corn and farmers will definitely be at the losing end.

The militant peasant group maintained that it is not yet proven that the Bt corn has no adverse effects to human health and environment.

The group also announced the formal launching of the International Alliance Against Agrochemical TNCs (IAAATNCs) on December 3, to be held here in the Philippines and will carry the theme “Intensify the Struggle Against Agrochemical TNCs! Assert Our Right to Land and Food Without Poisons!” The launching coincide with the “No Pesticide Use Day” and will be attended by farmers, scientists, non-government organizations, church leaders, health workers and professionals from 21 countries the world over.

FYI!

source: ETC Group

FIVE MAJOR GENE GIANTS

1. Pharmacia (Monsanto)
2. DuPont
3. Syngenta
4. Aventis
5. Dow

> In 2000, 98% of all GE crops were grown in three countries: U.S., ARGENTINA AND CANADA.

> In 2000, three-quarters of the area devoted to GE crops was engineered for a single trait: HERBICIDE TOLERANCE.

> The rest was engineered for Bt crops, insect resistance or a combination of the two traits.

> Only Pharmacia’s (Monsanto) GE seed technology accounted for for 94% of the total area sown to GE crops in 2000.

> German-based agrochemical companies such as Bayer and BASF already announced plans to invest heavily in ag biotech.

> The top two seed companies: Syngenta and Pharmacia control 34% of the global agrochem market, valued at US\$29.9 Billion in 2000



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RESISTANCE AND SOLIDARITY AGAINST AGROCHEMICAL

TNCs is a broad alliance of Philippine-based farmer's organizations, NGOs, scientists, health workers/professionals, academes, and concerned individuals in opposition to Agrochemical TNCs and the evil menace of imperialist globalization. It promotes and advocates for alternative, natural and sustainable farming, and pushes for genuine agrarian reform as the foundation of food security and social justice.