

## Farmers Uproot Bt Corn



Farmers, nat'l minorities, women, students and their supporters uproot Bt-Corn in Monsanto's multi-location testing area in Maltana, Tampakán, South Cotabato.

**“We Dared to Strike the Fiercest Blow Against Monsanto.”**

by Greg Alvarez

Secretary General, KMP - Far Southern Mindanao

On the morning of August, 29, 2001, more than 1,000 organized peasants and small landowners who practiced sustainable agriculture for years were not able to control their emotional upsurge upon seeing the most dreaded mutant corn. The farmers and their supporters slashed, uprooted and trampled the Bt and non-Bt corn inside the experimental lot enclosed with a cyclone wire measuring about 75 x 75 meters in three minutes.

Concerned scientists and peasant leaders warned and educated them that such corn variety is hazardous to the health and an affront to bio-diversity. It is nothing but a ploy of agrochemical TNCs to intensify the promotion of their monopoly seeds as a tool or technology as well as to cover-up the violence they inflicted on the farmers due to the introduction and failures of the Green Revolution during the Marcos dictatorship.

Yesterday's event was staged as a show of force of organized militant peasants opposing the Monsanto and Pioneer Seeds' (both agrochemical TNCs) aggressive promotion of genetically engineered Bt corn. We proved our worth as defenders of the people's cause, protecting the interests of the impoverished farmers, consumers, and the environment against

*continued on page 3*

## Local Anti-Agrochem TNC Alliance Launched

**BANNERING THE THEME “Intensify the Struggle Against Agrochemical TNCs, Assert Our Right to Land and Food Without Poisons!”**, a local alliance against agrochemical TNCs will be formally launched on September 14, 2001 with a protest action and forum at the University of the Philippines in Los Baños, Laguna. RESIST Agrochem TNCs (Resistance and Solidarity Against Agrochemical Transnational Corporations), unites Philippine-based farmers' organizations, NGOs, academes and individuals against the disastrous effects of globalization on small farmers, the environment and national agriculture, and the continuing economic backwardness of Third World countries.

RESIST Agrochem TNCs is the local counterpart of the International Alliance Against Agrochemical TNCs (IAAATNCs), which organizes against the agrochemical industry's growing control on agriculture at the international level. The IAAATNCs, in cooperation with the Pesticide Action Network-Asia Pacific (PAN-AP), the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and other organizations in the Asian region, held the “People's Caravan 2000: Land and Food Without Poisons” that traveled from India and

*continued on page 4*

## INSIDE

- 2 ... Peasant Actions Earn Support
- 3 ... Int'l Alliance Fights Agrochems
- 4 ... “Wipe Up the Mess”

# Need To Look Into Whole Aspect of GMOs

Article also printed in the September 10, 2001 issue of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*

by FRANCES QUIMPO, National Director, Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment

**We applaud the recent peaceful and militant protest action of farmers groups headed by Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) chapter in South Cotabato against the field testing of *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) corn, a so-called genetically modified organism (GMO).**

Contrary to the statement of Monsanto, a leading proponent of the commercialization of GMOs, the farmer's group and their supporters was not a mob and their protest action was legitimate.

As a sign of protest, the group uprooted all the experimental plants of Bt corn in Barangay Maltana, Tampacan, South Cotabato.

This was after the group exhausted all possible legal venues over the years to air their disagreement and concerns against the field testing of the controversial plant.

Scientists, consumer and environmental groups support the farmers' action. It expresses our strong opposition against the introduction and commercialization by agrochemical transnational companies' GMO products in our agriculture and food market.

We believe that GMO products, as currently marketed, such as the Bt corn, will further impoverish our local farmers, threaten their health and degrade our environment.

While it is still an open debate whether GMO products are safe or not, it is an obvious fact that these products are now designed to earn significant profits for the agrochemical companies.

Let us look back at the predecessor of GMOs in agriculture, the High Yielding Varieties (HYVs). In the '60s, the Green Revolution packaged HYVs as the solution to our low agricultural productivity and will result in the alleviation of farm-

ers' poverty.

While there was an increase in rice production in the early years of the Green Revolution, the ill effects of HYVs have been showing up, with our farmers reeling from its negative impacts, to wit:

- Increase in production cost of agriculture. Costs of HYV seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides rise annually. These end up negating the income realized by farmers from increase in their harvest.
- Widespread erosion of our traditional rice and corn varieties. In the 1960's there were more than 5,000 rice vari-

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eties planted in the Philippines. By the '90s, 87 percent of our total farmlands are planted to only five to six hybrid varieties. Similarly, our farmers have lost natural local food source such as hito and local kuhol, again brought about by intensive use of chemical inputs.

- Increase in poisoning incidence and chemical related diseases among farming communities brought about by intensive use and inadequate information regarding the proper handling of chemical inputs in production.
- Widespread degradation of agricultural lands because of increased soil acidity and toxicity. Increased incidence of pest outbreaks and resurgence of major plant pests and diseases such as the golden kuhol, tungro virus and

corn borer.

Again, agro-chemical TNCs, the proponents of HYV, are now proclaiming GMOs as the "new solution" to our low productivity in agriculture. We could not help believing otherwise.

In the United States, Monsanto commercially sells Bt corn seeds and products to farmers and food corporations. Bt corn seeds come with a contract agreement and pre-packaged agricultural products.

First, farmers are not allowed to collect, store, share and plant second generation Bt corn seeds. Farmers who do so can be imprisoned or charged in court. This just means that they will have to continue buying the seeds from the market.

Second, when farmers buy and plant Monsanto Bt corn seeds they must also buy and use Monsanto Round-Up herbicide. This scheme brought multimillion dollar profits for Monsanto in the United States alone.

In 1998 Monsanto had a 25 percent increase in volume sale of Round-Up herbicide and a tripling of the area planted with Monsanto's GMO crops.

Farmers, scientists, environmentalists and consumers are open to and welcome any development in science and technology as well as their corresponding products as long as these will bring benefits and truly serve mankind.

But the GMO products of agrochemical TNCs like the Bt and golden rice will not solve our century-old problem of low agricultural productivity and alleviate farmers from poverty nor will it prevent the degradation of our environment.

Its clear design and purpose is the further dependency of our farmers on agrochemical TNC products such as seeds, chemical fertilizer and pesticide thus intensifying their monopoly control of our agriculture.

# IAAATNCs Continues Fight Vs. Agrochem TNCs

**As a part of its continued struggle against imperialist globalization in agriculture, the member convenors of the International Alliance Against Agrochemical Transnational Corporations (IAAATNCs) met for the May 29, 2001 Strategy Meeting Against Agrochemical TNCs in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.**

Sixteen participants from various NGOs and people's organizations around the world sat down to plan and coordinate upcoming activities of the IAAATNCs, consolidate and expand its membership, as well as strengthen their efforts to battle the Agrochem TNCs. The Strategy Meeting followed one of the international alliance's major activities since its founding at the Digos Conference in November 1999, the People's Caravan 2000.

The convenors of the IAAATNCs set and adopted three objectives from the May 29 meeting. They plan to challenge and confront Agrochem TNCs and related food/agrochemical industries on such issues as pesticides, GMOs, food security, and land rights. They also plan to reduce, with the aim to eliminate, the power of the TNCs, as well as build a movement against Agrochem TNCs

with strong North-South partnerships.

The group also developed strategies and drew up a plan of action to coordinate their activities in their own countries and internationally. Some of these strategies include the continuous gathering and exchange of information and case studies regarding the anti-peasant activities of agrochem TNCs, their negative impacts, and the alternatives for peasants and farmers. The International alliance also plans to set up a People's Tribunal that will include the testimonies of victims of Agrochem TNCs, farmers, and scientists, as well as a citizen's jury.

In line with its coordinated activities, some members of the IAAATNCs took part in the Peasant Strategy Workshop on the WTO/AOA co-organized by KMP, the Pesticide Action Network - Asia and the Pacific (PAN-AP), La Via Campesina, and IBON. The meeting took place in Penang, Malaysia from July 24- 27. The group will also be gearing up for protest activities around the upcoming WTO meeting in Qatar and the World Food Summit, as well as the Day of No Pesticide Use and Peasant Week culminating on October 21.

from page 1

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imperialist acts of plunder now under the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade - World Trade Organization (GATT-WTO).

There are enough reasons for the farmers to justify such a move:

- The first field trial of Bt in Lagao, General Santos City by Monsanto was faced with people's protest. There was a series of resolutions from the city council instructing Monsanto to stop the field trial and it was even contested in the highest court of law. But it was the National Committee on Bio-Safety of the Philippines (NCBP) who rushed to defend Monsanto. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Monsanto saying the decision was made due to technical defects of the documents presented and not on the merits of the complaints.
- As a precedence, the Pioneer Seeds also conducted a field trial of Bt corn in Glamang, Polomolok, South Cotabato. The same pattern of legal struggle was followed by the petitioners, and they were unable to stop the experimentation.
- While there are some barangays who preferred to stay away from Monsanto and Pioneer Seeds, one barangay council managed to repeal their resolution which previously gave nod to entertain any request for Bt corn field trial. The city council of General Santos city issued a five year moratorium to any entry of GMOs in the city. The most applauded one was the resolution unanimously agreed by the councilors of Koronadal City last June 2001, declaring the city as GMO free.

These are examples that should have warned Monsanto

and Pioneer Seeds to refrain from their thrust since local government units tend to adapt precautionary principles with regards to GMOs. Instead, they became more insidious in their approaches to pushing their field trials. In Maltana, it was learned by the farmers that Monsanto organized the Institute of Bio-Safety Committee (IBC) which is headed by barangay councilors. Ironically, IBC was given the power to approve the application of Monsanto to conduct field testing of Bt corn. This IBC lobbied hard in the barangay council pushing for site experimentation. There were petitions by concerned groups submitted to LGUs and other concerned agencies but there was no substantial action. The Bt corn was planted on July 10, 2001 upon the approval of NCBP issued on the month of June 2001.

- Farmers critical to GMOs cannot afford to witness the impending contamination of Bt corn in their fields for fear of health hazards and the loss in market of their own products. The majority of farmers and consumers are still uninformed on this issue. The people should acquire balanced vital information on Bt corn in particular before anything else or they should take drastic actions before it's too late.
- Bt corn is out of context in the problems of corn farmers. Corn borer is never a primary problem but instead a peripheral one. The more alarming and immediate problems of these farmers include landlessness, the price manipulation of farm produce during harvest, the concentration of lands to plantations engaged in export crop production, mining, usury and other features of the semi-feudal and semi-colonial character of Philippine society.

We hope that this experience of ours will set the pace for more direct action by farmers against agrochemical TNCs and genetically engineered (GE) crop field trials all over the country.

## WIPE UP THE MESS

by Heather McKee Hurwitz

*For the farmers of the Philippines  
and oppressed workers all over the world*

We walked out onto the rice fields  
the plants like school girls' ponytails all in rows.  
Someone helped God set them like that,  
we learned it was a farmer who worked very hard.  
The year was 2001 and here on planet Earth  
some humans were still kneading land  
for food to be made, for rice to be cooked.

Across the rows the plants were like soldiers  
and in my mind raged the battle of modernity:  
But, this is where rice comes from?  
Here? From hands and land since growing began?  
And the plants were peaceful little guns,  
the silent suburban lawn to a dysfunctional home.

Downstream the dirt road beside the field,  
nanay and tatay were busy with their chores.  
In Los Banos, dad has Parkinson's disease,  
mom is quiet and overworked, and seven kids  
in each family plead to get out of town.

Like Homer and Marge, these folks live and breathe  
thanks to a chemical company. Pesticide and chemical  
farming or nuclear power plant, it's the same  
polluting capitalists and technology. On this road  
cartoon hearts and cartoon minds flash on numbing TVs,  
while Philippine blood leaks across the land  
and out of souls. Multi-national companies like IRRI  
do harmful chemical, pesticide and biotechnology  
experiments on Southern farms and farmers.

They coat Earth like shattered glasses of milk on a kitchen table.  
Ma used to cook her rice and make her family's  
favorite meals the way her mama taught her.  
Pop used to grow rice the good old fashioned way,  
the variety of his people, the indigenous grain of his land,  
not this new fangled imperialist version.  
Rice looks like kids stretching their hands.  
Exploited work of Southern farmers is food on our tables.  
Cry for these spilled souls and help wipe up the mess.

**THE POEM "WIPE UP THE MESS"** is based on an exposure trip to the farms of Los Banos in the Philippines. Because of the multi-national company, International Rice and Research Institute (IRRI), workers are exposed to harsh chemical farming experiments. Many farmers have acquired Parkinson's disease because of the chemicals. Moreover, these farmers used to own their lands, but IRRI, through forceful coercion and government sanction has taken the farmers' lands. People of the community are left landless, oppressed, and saturated with chemicals and disease. IRRI is supported by many countries, including the United States and the Philippines, which allow IRRI to operate outside of any

restrictions for health, safety, or workers' rights. Like other multi-national companies, IRRI is supported by IMF/WB/WTO/GATT policies which encourage Southern countries to rely on "free trade" and "helpful biotechnology" which in fact, serve to exploit Southern workers, people and cultures for the monetary and scientific gains of Northern corporations and countries and Southern elites. Please write to your congresspeople, tell your friends and neighbors, forward this message to spread the word that chemical and pesticide farming, multi-national companies, and the policies of the WB/IMF/WTO/GATT and the United States government are destroying the livelihood of farmers and are destroying mother Earth.

- Ms. Hurwitz is a Masteral Student of the Women and Development Program at UP Diliman.

### "LAUNCH" from page 1

Bangladesh to the Philippines.

Agrochemical TNCs' profit-centric goals at the expense of the people's health and the environment, and their increasing control on Third World agriculture and economies resulted in an international uproar and resistance against agrochemical TNCs. These practices work under the framework of imperialist globalization which binds Third World agriculture in favor of the TNCs and industrial countries. Protest and direct actions against these agrochem TNCs include uprooting of genetically modified crops, occupation of seed breeding and storage facilities, and padlocking of companies. Other forms of resistance include the revitalization of alternative and natural farming, the use of indigenous knowledge, the struggle for genuine land reform and the movement against globalization.

The formation of RESIST Agrochem TNCs is a significant breakthrough in the galvanizing efforts of peasants, people's organizations, NGOs, scientists, health workers and professionals, academicians and concerned individuals against a specific disastrous effect of globalization. The launching of the alliance coincides with the International Rice Research Institute's (IRRI) board meeting in Cambodia.

On December 3, RESIST Agrochem TNCs will host the launching of the IAAATNCs and a week-long conference, protests and activities against agrochemical TNCs. The activity will reach its peak on December 10, International Human Rights Day, carrying the theme "Assert Our Right to Land and Food Without Poisons."

## RESIST!

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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.