

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**AFRICAN CENTRE FOR BIOSAFETY AND**  
**EARTHLIFE AFRICA, ETHEKWINI BRANCH**

**BAYER, MONSANTO VIE FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S SUGAR CANE**

18 Feb 2005: After being forced out of the United Kingdom[i], withdrawing its plans to commercialise GM canola in Australia and abandoning its research in India,[ii] Bayer Cropscience has turned to South Africa for its genetic engineering experimentation.

Bayer is bankrolling the South African Association-Sugarcane Research Institute (SASRI) who has approached South Africa's National Department of Agriculture for permission to conduct open field trials of GM sugar cane.[iii] SASRI also hopes to test a GM sugar cane variety using Monsanto's Bt gene.

Bayer Cropscience is a new company, formed only in 2002, when it purchased Aventis Cropscience, well-known for the food contamination scandal in the United States involving its 'Starlink' (Cry9c) maize.

Bayer Cropscience is a subsidiary of the pharmaceutical giant Bayer AG. Bayer AG has left a 40 year legacy of ecological debt in South Africa as a result of its dumping of toxic waste in the South Durban Basin. Consequently, workers were poisoned and the ground water polluted by Chrome VI, a carcinogenic toxic substance. This legacy also spread to Northern KwaZulu Natal when Bayer set up a plant in Newcastle South Africa, to process toxic chrome products after the chrome processing plant was shut down in Germany.

"This bankrolling of GM sugar cane research is the continuation of the corporate colonisation of Africa by multinational corporations such as Bayer and Monsanto, who are now promoting another toxic legacy, this time targeting the food security of future generations." Said Bryan Ashe, spokesperson for Earthlife Africa eThekwini.

In August 2004, at the 8th World Sugar Conference, Luther Markwart, member of the Sugar Industry Biotechnology Task Council and advisor and a member of the advisory committee of both the U.S trade representative and the U.S secretary of agriculture, strongly urged the sugar industry to "embrace biotechnology." [iv]

"Certainly, the Gene Giants have heeded Markwart's call and have found in South Africa, a perfect haven for their genetic engineering project" said Mariam Mayet of the African Centre for Biosafety.

The South African sugar cane industry made up of 50 000 registered growers produce more than 27 million tons of sugarcane from 14 mill supply areas. South Africa exports sugar to the Southern Africa Custom's Union (SACU) and numerous markets in Africa, the Middle East, North America and Asia. [v]

Both ACB and ELA Ethekwini will be submitting objections to SASRI's field trial applications.

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[i] See for example, the pressure it faced in the United Kingdom Bayer Head Quarters Blockaded over Genetic Modification concerns.

<http://www.greeneyes.grn.org/2002/02/msg00193.html>

[ii] Bayer Pulls out of Genetic Engineering Research in India: Admits to Greenpeace the Future is in Conventional Farming.

[http://www.greenpeace.org/india\\_en/press/release?item\\_id=647443&campaign\\_id=](http://www.greenpeace.org/india_en/press/release?item_id=647443&campaign_id=)

[iii] Personal Communication, Dr Botha, SASRI, 17 February 2005.

[[iv] World Sugar Industry Competes for Markets, August 2, 2002

<http://www.crystalsugar.com/media/news.archives/brazil.asp>

[v] The South African Sugar Industry, Industry Information.

<http://www.sasa.org.za>