

UNPRECEDENTED OPPOSITION TO MONSANTO'S GMO TRIALS IN SA: ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!!

Joint Press Release: African Centre for Biodiversity, NO GMO SA, March Against Monsanto SA and South African Food Sovereignty Campaign

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More than 25 000 people have signed a petition opposing Monsanto's GMO field trials and in support of Objections submitted today by the **African Centre for Biodiversity** (ACB) to South African GMO regulators. The trials, which have caused an outpouring of resistance, rage and opposition, are three 'stacked' genetically modified (GM) maize events involving Monsanto's bogus drought tolerant trait; a failed pesticide (Bt) trait already discarded due to insect resistance; a replacement trait that is bound to develop resistance; and a trait that confers resistance to the cancer causing chemical, glyphosate. These open field trials are to take place in several locations in the Western and Northern Cape, Free State and Mpumalanga.¹

Monsanto's drought tolerant trait, MON87460, is currently on appeal by the ACB on a number of grounds, including that a single gene (*cspB*) does not confer efficacious drought tolerance and is yet another risky and novel gene introduced into our staple food. According to the ACB's Objections, controversies also surround the already approved parental lines: MON810 has been phased out in SA due to the development of pest resistance and resultant product failure. It has been replaced with MON89034, which is likely to

¹ The current applications are for an extension of the above trials for a third season for MON87460 x MON89034 and MON 87460 x MON89034 x NK603, and a second season for MON87460 x MON810

develop similar resistance. NK603 confers tolerance to the toxic herbicide glyphosate. The safety of this chemical is deeply controversial since the WHO International Association for Research into Cancer (IARC) categorised it as a class 2A carcinogen in May 2015. A large number of people have also signed a petition calling for a ban on the use of glyphosate in SA.

According to Mariam Mayet, Director of the ACB, “introducing more risky GMOs containing bogus drought tolerance into an ecologically unsustainable industrial agriculture system that is responsible for greenhouse gas emissions- in order to combat climate change -is profoundly cynical and utterly disingenuous.”

Despite more than a decade of assurances, GM maize has not been a boon to consumers in South Africa nor has it addressed food insecurity in the country. 46% of South African households go to bed hungry every night, 1 in 4 children are stunted as a result of undernourishment and we are faced with high obesity levels due to the lack of micronutrients. The promotion of maize mono-diets is a major cause of undernourishment and malnutrition in South Africa.

NO GMO SA, a voluntary anti GM activist community is calling for an urgent transition to agro-ecology. According to Trevor Wells, “GMOs have been grown in South Africa since 1998 and we're still waiting for them to solve our nation's hunger problems. Instead, we are left with polluted soil and water and loss of our superior, local farmer-bred varieties of maize.”

The **South African Food Sovereignty Campaign** (SAFSC) has also voiced its strong opposition to the trials. According to Vishwas Satgar, “GM maize has dismally failed us during our current drought. We are also extremely concerned about the political economy of

seed control that Monsanto has imposed on our seed system, which utterly undermines our food sovereignty.”

Every year thousands of South Africans take to the streets to March Against Monsanto. The **March Against Monsanto SA** community is particularly concerned that current evidence suggests that containment of transgenic DNA is impossible to guarantee. According to spokesperson Rushka Johnson, “local land races belonging to smallholder farmers in SA have already been contaminated. Monsanto’s trials will only exacerbate this situation and further erode farmers’ seed systems.”

The ACB Objections are also supported by:

Permaculture South Africa who believe that GMOs are not only dangerous to our environment and long term food, farm and plant diversity in South Africa but are also not viable options for farming in South Africa.

EATEGRITY who insists that we must look for real solutions for nutritional food security and that the time has come for the voices of the South African citizens to be heard.

ACB’s objection can be downloaded here:

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