

8th of April 2006: Joint International GM Opposition Day (JIGMOD)

The World Trade Organization (WTO) -- whose Deputy Director General previously served as the European general counsel for the agrochemical and biotechnology giant Monsanto -- has ruled yesterday in favor of genetically modified (GM) crop producers against the European Union (EU). International critics of GMOs (genetically modified organisms) are confident that European citizens remain opposed, and that GMOs will not significantly break into the European market. However, they are concerned that it will open the way to the development of GM crops, as well as the contamination of both GM-free fields and food chains. Furthermore, the WTO is thus dictating a message to the world that it is useless to attempt to regulate GMOs.

In this context, 100 international organizations from more than 40 countriesⁱ are now announcing April 8, 2006 as a Joint International GM Opposition Day. The day will feature major public events in several of these countries to demonstrate continuing global opposition to genetically modified foods and crops.

"This international day follows the WTO decision to restrain European governments from protecting their farmers and other citizens from the threat of GMOs," explained one of the US promoters of the event. We will join with our allies around the world to condemn the WTO decision, and to denounce the US administration's attempts to impose this hazardous technology on us all."

On the 8th of April, "Information Sites" distributed worldwide will allow the general public to learn more about the social, scientific, environmental and health dimensions of the GMO file. Some of these sites will be linked through a video-conference that will provide a forum for GM opponents to dialog across the world, including the historical figures of the movement. A letter, written by a team of scientists and others, which emphasizes health risks and problems of genetically engineered organisms, will notably be presented during this conference. A public demonstration will occur in Chicago, USA, where the biotechnology industry is holding its annual convention. A promotion of "peasant seeds," as the pre-existing alternative to GM crops, will be launched in several countries. Among other joint initiatives, a NO-to-GMO Mosaic composed of pieces originating from many regions of the world will be exhibited in Turkey. Concerts, movies, discovery walks and peasant markets will accompany exhibitions by sponsoring organizations.

"We are concerned about our quality of life, and want to prevent our farms and our dinner plates from being touched by GMOs," said Dominique B roule, of the JIGMOD Coordinating Team in France. For ten years, organizations worldwide have followed parallel and complementary tracks toward this goal. Now, whereas the WTO intervenes to extend the GMO market and suppress protective regulations, environmentalists, farmers, and consumer organizations are joining in to inform the public of the increasing evidence against genetically modified crops and food, on the occasion of a worldwide appointment."

"The more people learn about the hazards of GMOs for our health, the environment, and traditional agricultural communities, the more they oppose this technology," explained Brian Tokar, of the US-based Institute for Social Ecology. "And in many countries, this concern has been translated into sound public policies to limit the importation and growing of GM products. That is why corporations work to suppress public awareness in the US, and why our government has pressed the WTO to overrule sound protective actions in other countries."

"The countries that have adopted GM are facing higher costs and market rejection which is why they want to force the GM problem on other competitive countries. Farmers want to market what consumers want, and it is not GM. Contamination is not controllable and economic loss will occur but it should be the GM companies, not the non-GM farmers, that should be forced to accept the liability for the losses GM crops will cause." said Julie Newman, of the Australian Network of Concerned Farmers.

According to Ignacio Chapela, microbial ecologist and Professor at the University of California (Berkeley), "We want to make sure that GMOs are not released into the environment without public transparency and informed consent, but to recognize that some manipulations of organisms might be useful, provided there is a high degree of public responsibility and technical capacity to ensure that they do not come out of a laboratory."

Dr Arpad Pusztai, who pioneered research on the nutritional and developmental impacts of transgenic food, declares: “Will the biotech company executives pushing GM crops on an unwilling public be able to face their own children and grandchildren when the health damage and environmental dangers of GM crops will come true?”

Events during the period leading up to the 8th of April include:

- o **24 February** : Conference of the European GM-free regions, 24 February, in Krakow, **Poland**.
- o **3 March** : National demonstrations in several towns of **Germany**
- o **5 April** : March for GMO-free regions during the GMO European Conference held in Vienna, **Austria**.
- o **6 April** : National Call-In Day to the US Congress, in support of the "Genetically Engineered Food Right to Know Act, **USA**
- o **8 April** : JIGMOD, **Earth**

The full program and complete list of sponsors will be updated until the 8th of April on the dedicated website: <http://altercampagne.free.fr/>

ⁱ Hawaiï, California, Washington, Mexico, Texas, Illinois, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Peru, Iowa, Vermont, Chile, Argentina, Wales, Portugal, Spain, Togo, Benin, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, Germany, Italia, Malta, Croatia, Poland, Hungary, Austria, RDC, Zambia, Turkey, Mauritius, India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Japan, Western Australia.

Current organizations: GMO-Free Maui, GMO-Free Hawai'i, Microbial Ecology, The Campaign, Greenpeace México, Sistemas Alimentarios Sustentables, GEA, Organic farming community, Genetic Engineering Action Network, Asociación para la Diversificación y Desarrollo Agrícola Comunal (ADDAC), Alianza de Protección a la Biodiversidad, Engineer in environmental quality, Movimiento de la JUventud Kuna Organizacion Indígena, Grupo Agricultura Alternativa y de Alerta Ante la Transgenesis (AGALAT), Conexión Ecológica, Corporación Serraniagua, Palabra Mision Rural, Alternativas al uso de Agroquímicos (RAAA), Red de Accion en Plaguicidas y sus Alternativas para América Latina (RAP-AL), Institute for Responsible Technology, Institute for Social Ecology, Biodevastation to biojustice, For A Better Bronx, Coalición Educativa Pro Agricultura Ecológica (CEPAE), Red por un Chile Libre de Transgénicos, Acción por la Biodiversidad, Instituto para la Producción e Investigación de la Agricultura Tropical, GM Free Cymru, Friends of the Earth UK, Amigos de la Tierra, Afrique Assistance, Agronomy, Fermiers Sans Frontières, Collectif d'Action GénÉthique, Friends of the Earth Europe, XminY Solidarityfunds, Amis de la Terre, Attac-France, FNAB, Greenpeace - France, Nature & Progrès, La Confédération Paysanne, Agir pour l'Environnement, FNE, Amis de la Confédération Paysanne, Groupe International d'Etudes Transdisciplinaires, Sciences Citoyennes, Terre Sacrée, Collectif Danger OGM, Attac-France, Minga, Attac-Comminges, Collectif anti-OGM des Monts du Lyonnais, la Ruche de l'écologie, Collectif d'organisations anti-OGM, Collectif anti-OGM Auvergnat, Collectif anti-OGM du Languedoc-Roussillon, Collectif anti-OGM de la région Centre, Collectif Breton anti-OGM, Pour une Franche Comté sans OGM, Greenpeace-Luxembourg, Faucheurs Volontaires, Gendreck Weg, Agrargruppe von Attac-Wuppertal, GMO/Fair-trade-Youth-project, Crocevia, Nutritional Sciences, Makronova Institute, Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside, Attac-Austria, plate-forme Togo/RDC, The Environmental Conservation Association of Zambia, No to GMOs Platform, Association pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine Génétique Alimentaire, Navdanya, Erode District Organic Farming Network, Sunray Harvesters, Living Farms, Bangladesh Krishok Federation, Consumers International-Thailand, vision21, Network of Concerned Farmers, Consumers Union of Japan, Comercio Justo México, Greenpeace México, GEA Sistemas Alimentarios Sustentables, Asociación Nacional de Empresas Comercializadoras de Productores del Campo,A.C., Greencorner, Aires de campo, Asociación de Productores Orgánicos, Red Mexicana de Tianguis Orgánicos, Association de Secours et d'Orientation Lisungi « ASOL », Afrique Assistance, Grupo de Acção et Inetvenção Ambiental (GAIA), Plataforma Transgénicos For a do Prato, Groupe d'Action et de Réflexion pour une Politique Ecologique (GRAPPE), Resembrando e Intercambiando