

‘Genetically modified Seeds – Global Threat to Farmer Independence’

- Julian Rose -

Krakow GM conference, October 16th 2008

Seeds are the first expression of life – and the first link in the food chain. Whoever controls seeds controls the food chain and therefore controls the eating habits of entire nations right across the globe. Controlling eating habits, by extension, also means manipulating the physical, mental and spiritual health of mankind as a whole.

From the beginnings of formal agriculture, some eight thousand years before Christ, up until the beginning of the last century, peasant farmers have been the guardians of the health of nations. They have sown, selected, improved and diversified seed varieties as an integral part of their own farming practices. No laboratories or scientists in white coats could ever achieve what the world’s peasant farmers achieved over thousands of years of careful observation, trial and error and in response to the call of survival.

Their legacy is founded upon a deep respect for nature and a love of mother earth – and the reward for this planetary trusteeship comes in the form of an unpurchaseable quality called ‘wisdom’.

Contrast this form of truly sustainable land stewardship with what we find to-day – and one cannot help but become immediately aware that we are in a self inflicted crisis of enormous dimensions.

Over the past one hundred or so years, the peasants’ seeds have been expropriated (stolen) from their guardians by seed manufacturers who have manipulated these seeds to become fast growing agrichemically dependent hybrids, now the pirated property of corporations with the sole ambition of profiting from their mass production.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, these hybrids have grown steadily in number, usurping native, highly disease resistant varieties of vegetable, fruit and cereal seeds and forcing farmers to adopt agrichemical sprays and synthetic fertilisers without which the hybrids cannot achieve their potential.

What is more, these new varieties have proved to be of lower vigour and nutritional value than their unhybridized predecessors. They have weaker DNA and are highly susceptible to disease, therefore must be continuously sprayed with synthetic and often carcinogenic fungicides and pesticides to prevent them being killed by pests or fungal attacks.

In this way soils in which they grow are rendered sterile, and the seeds become ‘hooked’ - like junkies – on the drugs without which they are useless.

Genetically modified agriculture has all the same shortcomings, but is at least two times as dangerous. GM is a direct extension of the agrichemical monocultures which form its foundation – but with the added characteristic of being laboratorally designed to incorporate foreign genetic material bearing no relationship to, or with, the host plant. However, through this manipulation, the plant's DNA is sufficiently altered to enable the designer to claim a patent – therefore ownership – of this new “novel food.” A new form of food that has been brought into our diet for the first time.

Now, the farmer who purchases these seeds must pay a royalty to the new corporate owner and is strictly forbidden to save any of the resulting harvest for his or her own use. The process of enslavement is thus complete. The farmer must buy new seed from the corporation after every harvest and will face large fines or a goal sentence if he fails to comply – and many in the USA have already suffered this fate.

Millions more farmers in southern hemisphere countries are already victims of this extortionate practice – and many thousands are committing suicide each year because their genetically modified seeds have failed and they cannot afford to buy new seeds for their own survival needs.

It is not by chance but by deliberate design that this process of enslavement has been sold to nations. Disguised as a ‘beneficial development package’ to improve farmers incomes and resist disease, it ends up destroying their livelihoods, polluting their genetic stock and poisoning their soils.

There are now just four seed corporations that own 70% of the world's commercial seeds – they all have their origins in the US. One, Monsanto plc., has stated outright that its goal is to control the global food chain.

Please do not think for a moment that this is for any benign purpose, it is purely and simply to force all peoples of this planet to buy only from them, no matter how useless or dangerous the product might be. Such cynical manipulation of simple peasant people must rank as some of the most perverse ‘crimes against humanity’ ever perpetrated upon human kind.

Poland's peasant farmers are the last - and probably strongest - European line of resistance to the corporate piracy of their seeds. They are also in the front line of resistance in preventing the enslavement of the entire nation to a genetically modified diet on their plates and on the plates of every generation to come.

Genetic modification of the gene bank upon which we all depend , sets in motion an unrecalable process of destruction to the biodiversity pyramid of the planet – and enslaves not only farmers - but whole populations to a totally new and never tested dietary regime.

We become the guinea pigs in a vast and uncontrollable laboratory experiment which benefits only the already bloated bank balance of the predatory transnational corporations that foist it upon us.

Absolute resistance to GMO by both consumers and farmers is undoubtedly the best ever chance we have of turning around the fortunes of a nation which has suffered enough enslavement over the past 200 years - and needs no more.

Poland can stop this holocaust in its tracks – and, in so doing, remind the rest of the world just how important are the millions of small family farms that form the bedrock of a sane and time honoured sustainable agriculture.

This is the last chance saloon - the fire in the peasants' veins is this Country's greatest single asset, and if it is not recognised, supported and fanned into a powerful resistance against all that is programmed to kill – not just Poland but the whole world will be brought closer to slavery and despair.

JR 14/4/2008 (originally Jasna Gora speech: some small alterations)