

Drylands, waste-lands? Who says?

Susanne Gura, Pastoral Peoples

Current and planned production of agrofuels in dry and subhumid lands ignores the traditional use of these regions. So-called 'marginal lands or wastelands' are very often used by local communities especially for keeping livestock, and for collecting firewood and other flora and fauna. Traditional land use rights usually exist. Large-scale agrofuel cultivation, if implemented on such lands, may deprive local communities from their rights to these resources, increase their poverty and harm biodiversity (and not necessarily reduce GHG emissions!)

For example, 12 % of Indian land is categorized as "wasteland", and three quarters of it are designated for agrofuel production. Similarly, large agrofuel projects are planned in African drylands, primarily by the British agrofuel company D1 (see interview on the back page). Such lands are commonly used by the local population - 70% of the world's poor keep livestock, and a large part of this livestock browses on such land!

Pastoralism is critically important in drylands. It provides not only the livelihoods of some 200 million people, but also contributes to local and national economies. In countries of the Southern African region, smallholder livestock keepers provide as much as 38% of the Gross Domestic Product, and this does not include subsistence production, transport services, and manure. However, hardly any support is provided to this productive sector, while veterinary services, credit, subsidies and zoosanitary regulations often advantage industrial producers. Local breeding has been neglected for many decades in spite of the potential of local breeds, shown by the fact that a range of breeds from Asia and Africa have been introduced to and developed in the Americas, Oceania and Europe. Just a quick figure from the FAO (2007) State of the World of Animal Genetic Resources: Of the 40 domesticated livestock species, some 8000 still breeds exist. While last century, one breed per year was lost, the rate has accelerated to one per month. Most of this loss is due to industrial livestock production, which grows seven times faster than smallholder systems.

Since in dry and subhumid lands, livestock plays a major role in the local and national economy, especially in marginal areas where poverty is often high, we should support the conservation and improvement of local livestock breeds, not promote the conversion of these lands for export agrofuels!

CBD to wait until 2010 to act on biofuels?

Helena Paul, Econexus and Teresa Anderson, African Biodiversity Network

Civil society organizations are extremely concerned about the debate on biofuels (agrofuels), particularly with the possibility of postponing a recommendation to COP 10, even though new text is prepared (UNEP/SBSTTA/12/COW/CRP.1) and available. This text was not discussed at all on Wednesday and NGOs hope that it will not slip off Thursdays agenda as well.

As Wednesday progressed it became plain that some governments were also concerned about leaving any action regarding agrofuels until after COP 9. Agrofuel development is proceeding extremely fast. It would be a very serious problem if the CBD failed to use its mandate to respond to emerging issues. We need a precautionary approach to agrofuel development, not another commodity boom lining the pockets of big oil and big agriculture. As one delegate remarked, 'We cannot wait until 2010 to save our forests from these biofuels.'²

Today's ECO

1. Drylands and agrofuels

2. GM Trees + the Biosafety/Agrofuel nexus

3. A suicide seed sequel

4. Dr. N.D. Bracket returns! ECO Interview

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ECO thanks Swedbio for their on-going Support

Open letter to SBSTTA on the issue of GM trees

The undersigned **participants of SBSTTA or of meetings leading up to SBSTTA** wish to share their concerns about the issue of genetically modified trees within the process of the Convention of Biological Diversity. As you know, the last Conference of the Parties passed Decision VIII/19, which *recognized* “the uncertainties related to the potential environmental and socio-economic impacts, including long-term and transboundary impacts, of genetically modified trees on global forest biological diversity, as well as on the livelihoods of indigenous and local communities, and given the absence of reliable data and of capacity in some countries to undertake risk assessments and to evaluate those potential impacts”.

Among other things, it *recommended* Parties “to take a precautionary approach when addressing the issue of genetically modified trees”.

The above recommendation seems to have been basically ignored by a number of countries, where either official research centers or private companies continue carrying out work on genetic modification of trees and are even planning to carry out field trials, such as the current case of the company ArborGen, which is seeking permission for field trials of **flowering** eucalyptus trees in the US.

Research in genetic modification of trees is currently being carried out –disregarding the COP’s decision- in at least the following countries Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States.

Given that the COP8 Decision gave SBSTTA the task of assessing “the potential environmental, cultural, and socio-economic impacts of genetically modified trees on the conservation and sustainable use of forest biological diversity, and to report to the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties”; and given that the rush to produce biofuels is being used to promote the rapid

commercial development of genetically modified trees, we appeal to SBSTTA to:

- insist on compliance by all countries with the precautionary principle as agreed upon at COP8
- recommend a ban on GM trees on the basis of their potential impacts on forest biological diversity

Signatories here at SBSTTA:

Global Justice Ecology Project, World Rainforest Movement, Global Forest Coalition, Sobrevivencia/FOE Paraguay, STOP GE Trees Campaign North America, NOAA-Friends of the Earth Netherlands, Africa-Europe F & J Network, Friends of the Earth Europe, Friends of the Earth Malaysia, CENSAT-Aguaviva FOE Colombia, Indigenous Information Network – Kenya, Nordre Folkcenter for Renewable Energy – Denmark, Friends of the Siberian Forests – Russia, CELCOR/FOE Papua New Guinea, Pro REGENWALD – Germany, Robin Wood - Germany, Friends of the Earth—England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Consumers Association of Penang – Malaysia, Comision Intereclesiastica de Justicia y Paz – Colombia, Consejo Comunitario de la Cuenca del Currarado. Ole Siosiomaga Society Incorporated (OLSSI) Samoa, Fundación para la Promocion del Conocimiento Indigena – Panama, ICTI-Tanibar – Indonesia, PIPEC Pacific Indigenous Peoples Environment Coalition, New Zealand, FERN, International Alliance of the Indigneous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests, Corporate Europe Observatory, Greenpeace International, Ecologica Movement BIOM – Kyrgyzatan, CORE – Centre for Organization Research & Education, Northeast Region India, EQUATIONS, Ecological Society of the Philippines, Timberwatch Coalition - South Africa, Forest Peoples Programme – UK, MST – Brazil’s Landless Workers’ Movement, Viola – Russia, Ecoropa – Germany, ETC Group, Asociación Indígena Ambiental, Umwelt-und Projektwerkstatt, Germany, Global Environment Centre –Malaysia, Washington Biotechnology Action Council - U.S., BUKO Campaign against Biopiracy – Germany, The Gaia Foundation – UK, HATOFF Foundation – Ghana, Tebteba Foundation, Philippines, Nature Tropicale - Benin (West Africa), Jeunes Volontaires pour l’Environnement – Togo, Biofuelwatch – UK, Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum, NABU – Nature and Conservation Union – Germany, BUND – Friends of the Earth Germany, Indigenous Network on Economics and Trade – Canada.

Agrofuels as Biosafety Hazards

Eric Darier, Greenpeace

Agrofuels and cellulosic biofuels will increasingly require the extensive use of genetically engineered (GE) technologies. For example:

- Crops will be genetically engineered to be specifically adapted for producing ethanol. For example, Syngenta is already promoting a GE corn designed for ethanol production that, luckily, South Africa recently refused to approve.
- Agrofuels production will require more extensive and continuous use of monocrops for years. Industry is likely to promote GE crops to solve agricultural problems caused by monocultures, such as insect infestation. We know already that existing herbicide-resistant GE crops or crops made to produce their own pesticides have led to increased weed and insect resistance. GE crops for agrofuels are likely to worsen this trend.
- Commercialized cellulosic biofuels will require the extensive use of GE enzymes, fungus, etc. to process crops

into ethanol. Even if these GE organisms are used in contained facilities, it could cause genetic contamination of the environment through the disposal of waste residue.

For this reason the international community should carefully, but promptly, address the biosafety concerns related to the rapid expansion of agrofuels. The draft recommendation by the Chair of the Subsidiary Body on liquid fuel (SBSTTA12/COW”CRP.1) gives an explicit mandate to the proposed AHTEG. This is clearly a positive recommendation that goes in the right direction that will hopefully be adopted.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety should also be involved in this emerging issue to identify the specific biorisks that GE agrofuels will cause. It is becoming more and more important that the Protocol on Biosafety adopts a strict liability regime in case of GE contamination and damage. MOP4 must address the biosafety-concerns of this emerging issue.

In Europe, Terminator Teams Up with “Zombies” – A Suicide-Seed Sequel

Hope Shand

The good news is that nearly a decade of popular protest has prevented Terminator seeds from coming to market. At COP8 governments responded by unanimously re-affirming and strengthening the *de facto* moratorium on Terminator/GURTs (Decision V/5), which recommends against the field-testing or commercialization of seeds that have been genetically engineered to produce sterile seeds at harvest.

The bad news is that the European Union’s 3-year, 5 million euro Transcontainer project, part of the EU’s Sixth Framework Programme, is supporting new research on suicide seeds. Specifically, Transcontainer is developing seeds with “reversible transgenic sterility” – which we’ve dubbed “zombie seeds.” These are sterile seeds that a farmer could bring “back to life” by (buying) and applying a chemical. In other words, the seeds behave like classic Terminator seeds (i.e., they produce sterile seeds at harvest), except farmers would be obliged to pay for the privilege of restoring seed fertility *every year* – a new form of perpetual monopoly for the seed industry.

Despite the fact that European consumers have overwhelmingly rejected GM foods, the goal of the EU’s Transcontainer project is to develop GM crops and trees for Europe that could be “biologically contained.” Transcontainer research supports the goal of “co-existence” – the controversial idea that GM crops and non-GM crops can co-exist (or, that “acceptable” levels of GM contamination can be negotiated). In other words, it is a publicly funded initiative to help the biotechnology industry overcome the European public’s rejection of GM foods and crops.

It is especially disturbing that the European Union is using public funds to develop genetic seed sterilization in light of the European Parliament’s strong anti-Terminator stance only last year. The European Parliament passed a resolution in March 2006 urging European delegates meeting at the CBD in Curitiba, Brazil to uphold the *de facto* moratorium on Terminator.

Apologists for the Transcontainer project argue that its aim is not to restrict seed use and that sterile seeds offer a biosafety solution to the unwanted spread of transgenes from GM crops, trees and pharmaceutical-producing plants. They also argue that the technology they’re developing is different from Terminator because the seeds’ fertility can be recovered. Even if these ‘Zombie seeds’ are not being

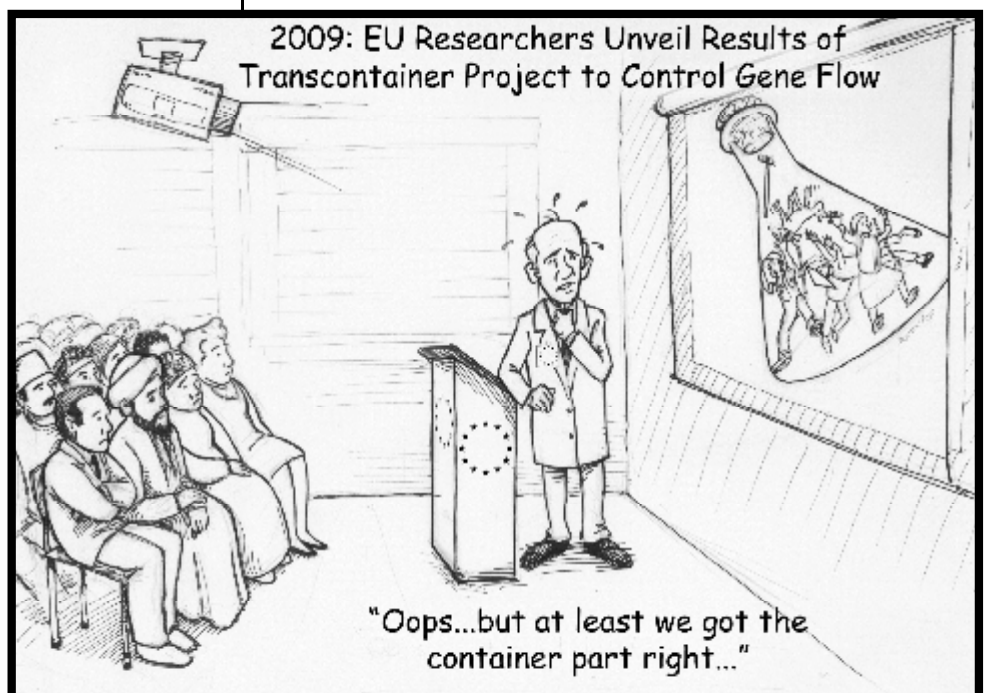
designed with the intent to restrict seed use, the reality is that if Zombie technology is commercialized, it will allow the multinational seed industry to tighten its grasp on proprietary seeds and to restrict the rights of farmers.

Greenwashing Agrofuels: With the threat of climate crisis, Big Ag and Big Oil are promoting the idea that we need a new generation of genetically modified crops and trees to make agrofuels viable and more efficient. But GM crops and trees won’t be accepted in many countries if the threat of GM contamination persists. Genetic seed sterility platforms will be promoted as a solution for “safer” agrofuels (as well as plants that are engineered to produce drugs and industrial chemicals).

Molecular biocontainment strategies cannot promise fail-safe containment of transgenes, but could nonetheless function as suicide seeds that pose unacceptable threats to farmers, biodiversity and food sovereignty. New research on suicide seeds threatens the 1.4 billion people who depend on farmer-saved seeds. There is no such thing as a safe and acceptable form of suicide seeds.

The technical understanding and political debate surrounding Terminator must be expanded and updated to include technical advances in GURTs technology, including the development of Zombie seeds (reversible transgenic sterility). The CBD’s SBSTTA should recommend that governments meeting at COP 9 (Bonn, Germany, 19-30 May 2008) strengthen the moratorium on Terminator/GURTs, by recommending a ban on the technology.

Side-Event tonight Terminator 2.0 -- A New Generation of GURTs
18:15 - 19:45



Statement from Dr. N.D. Bracket, NAELMMMD

Some of you may remember Dr. N.D. Bracket, the distinguished delegate from the Not-Always-Entirely-Like-Minded Mega Mega Diverse (NAELMMMD) who made his first statement in Curitiba (printed in ECO 15(5)), and who was publicly punished for his failure to punctuate appropriately, as appropriate, in ECO 15(9). (see www.cbdalliance.org for backcopies)



Thank-you Mr Chairman. As this has been my first opportunity to take the floor, in the interest of briefness, expediency, pragmatism, brevity, conciseness, succinctness, exactitude, clarity, simplicity, generating sound scientifically based risk assessments in Australia for alien invasive species with no possible participation of the great unwashed that we call the electorate - I would like to directly, and with all due respect for the time limit, avail myself of this opportunity, with a minimum of hesitation, deviation and repetition, to briefly prevaricate in a constructive spirit of compromise to join with the distinguished delegates of brother and sister Parties, while fully cognizant of the probability of perceptions of tendencies towards terseness, by not congratulating you upon your election as Chair of this august body in early July. Thank-you Mr. Chairman.

Dr. N.D. Bracket (PhD by Google)

[Permanent] [Interim][Elected] [Self-appointed] [and Temporarily
Incarcerated][Chair][Executive][Secretary][Typist]

Secretariat of the Not Always Entirely Like Minded Mega Mega Diverse [Confabulation] (NAELMMMD)
The Broom Cupboard
Curitiba Gaol
Brazil

Editors Note: The above communication was originally written on recycled toilet paper and received by carrier parrot directly from Curitiba Gaol. In a deeply unfortunate misunderstanding, Dr. Bracket was detained at the pleasure of the Brazilian government following the discovery of a wide variety of ethnobotanical medicines without the required documentation upon his departure from COP8. Dr. Bracket's efforts to explain that the ethnobotanical medicines were required for an experiment in the creation of biofuels and pharmaceuticals as a "win win" for conservation and sustainable abuse were tragically met with giggles from the judge. Dr. Bracket invites any members of the ad hoc open-ended agglomeration that is NAELMMMD to read the above statement to SBSTTA at a time of their convenience. The ragged trousered [Executive] [Secretary][Typist] hopes to be released from the benefits of Curitiba Gaol in time for the next ABS WG in Montreal if, that is, Canada will let him in.

ECO talks with Thuli Makama, Friends of the Earth Swaziland

In your view, what is the main biodiversity issue in Swaziland?

We are seeing *Jatropha* plantations being aggressively promoted by D1 Oils all over the country. This is being done with the promise of huge economic returns that will take communities out of poverty. But the drive for growing *jatropha* is competing with the drive for growing food. Food shortages in the country have been declared a national disaster by the government and many communities are actually surviving on food aid parcels. The issue of food aid is also a threat to our biodiversity because of the proliferation of GMOs in those grains, grains that communities use as seeds. We also have serious issues of protected areas whereby local communities are not only being excluded from accessing the biodiversity resources but, there is also brutalizing and criminalizing of these communities. You wonder for whose benefit??

What is your organization doing to address this?

Yonge Nawe, Friends of the Earth Swaziland, has programs geared towards empowering communities with information that they can use in mobilizing themselves and also resisting the take over of their local natural resources. We also have a program that engages with policy and legislation through public interest litigation amongst other strategies.

Tell us a bit about your organization.

My organization is twenty years old and its' priority is supporting local communities to have equitable access, control, and benefits from environmental and natural resources occurring within their localities.

What is your appeal to SBSTTA 12?

To do everything possible to ensure discussions towards containing this agro fuel menace find their way to the next COP. Agrofuels are not adding any value to our biodiversity instead we are witnessing further grief and suffering for local communities in the affected areas. Let developing nations find other alternatives for addressing the challenges posed by poverty. SBSTTA must flag the Precautionary Principle as the underlying consideration for decision making.



Thuli Makama