

# No patents on seeds and farm animals

Press release presented to FAO Commission on Genetic Resources

Greenpeace, Swissaid and Coldiretti

Rome, 11.06.2007 – Global ban on patents on seeds and farm animals. Today, in an expert meeting of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, Greenpeace, the Swiss development organization SwissAid and the biggest Italian farmers' organization Coldiretti are urging for a global ban. The three organizations are representing a new coalition called "No Patents on Seeds" which is supported by more than 30 farmer organizations worldwide and hundreds of other organizations ([www.no-patents-on-seeds.org](http://www.no-patents-on-seeds.org)). The organizations are afraid that especially in Europe more and more patents are claimed and granted on plants and animals derived from normal, conventional breeding. The FAO expert meeting in Rome is in preparation for a major international conference in September at Interlaken, Switzerland.

"Big companies such as Syngenta are claiming broad patents on basic staple crops such as rice. The worldwide coalition will continue to put pressure on companies like Syngenta to drop such patents, that are threatening the world's food security," says Tina Goethe from Swissaid.

But not only seeds are subjected to broad monopoly claims. According to research by Greenpeace, the US company Monsanto was already filing dozens of patent applications in the context of normal pig breeding. Patents on farm animals will only help large livestock genetics companies to increase their power and market domination, as a recent study by the League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development points out. Smallholder livestock farmers and pastoralists find it very difficult to compete when public subsidies, research funds and regulations favour industry. The loss of breeds of smallholders and pastoralists is one of the major issues of the FAO expert meeting in Rome.

"We were really shocked when we found out that Monsanto is planning take over of animal breeding sector after they already managed to become worldwide number one in buying up seed companies" says Federica Ferrario from Greenpeace Italy. "We are happy that FAO is dealing with this issue now that it can be decisive for future of world food supply".

"We have to stop the patentability over genetic resources for plant and animal breeding. Otherwise farmers and consumers will lose the control of the whole chain of production – from stable to the table," says Coldiretti. "The goal is to defend not only the alimentary sovereignty, but also a model of sustainable agriculture that respects quality and biodiversity. This model, thanks to those peculiarities guaranteed by agricultural enterprises implementing the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy, is an inalienable heritage for the society of today and tomorrow".

“No patents on seeds” is a global petition directed to the European Patent Office, where a precedent case has been currently discussed: a patent on a conventionally bred broccoli variety, covering seeds, edible parts and the whole plant. Other patents such these, directed to maize and rice, will especially affect countries of the South.

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