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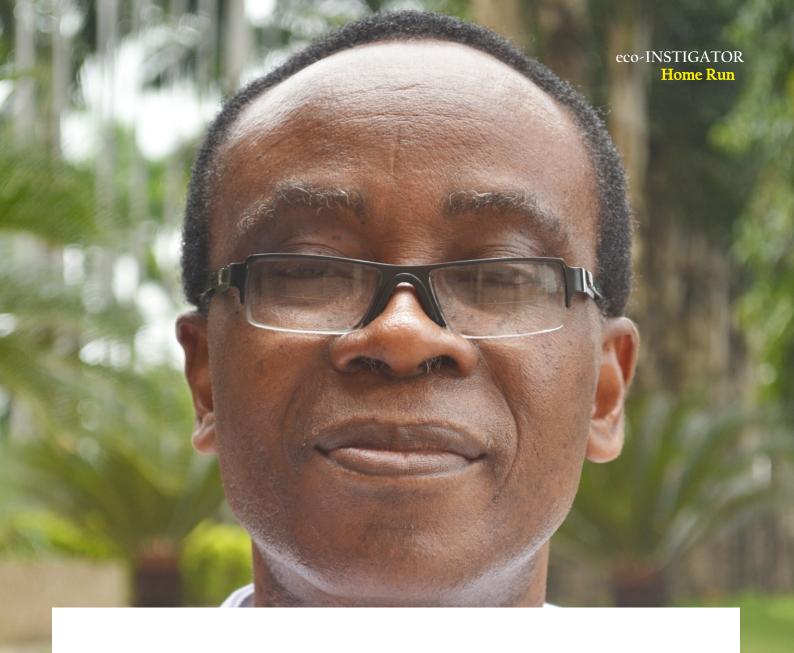




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elcome to the fourth edition of our journal, the Eco-Instigator. In this issue we are serving you a menu of materials that will hopefully make you look at your plate before plunging in your spoon and taking it to your mouth.

The World Environment Day 2013 urged everyone to Think Eat Save. Yet it appears people are eating without thinking and loads of foods are wasted without care. Permit me to recall a bit of what we wrote in a paper we presented at an event to mark that day.

It is a known fact that enough food is produced in the world to feed every person. So, people are not hungry because there is no food in the world. This also explains why small-scale farmers do go hungry even though they produce food. This suggests that there is a systemic factor. This factor is not as hidden as the proverbial hand of the market used to be once upon a time. The food crisis of 2007/2008, for example, was mostly caused by speculations and overall impacts of the commoditization of food products.

When that food crisis erupted some analysts questionably characterised it as a silent Tsunami. Our position was that the grounds for the food crisis were intentionally laid and nourished by systemic forces and thus was very predictable.

It is generally accepted fact that hunger is not necessarily a result of lack of food but of the lack of access to food.

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GMO Myths

In the paper we also wrote about the myths with which proponents of GMOs promote their wares:

- 1. That GE crops produce higher yields than their natural relatives. This has been faulted by researchers such as the Union of Concerned Scientists of the USA who have shown that GE crops at best have equal yield with natural varieties. In other words, they hold no advantage in this area. This is so despite the fact that the industry starts off with the best seeds available. We must keep in mind that this technology works in monocultures and is not amendable to the mixed cropping and small scale farming that characterise African agriculture.
- 2. That GE crops require less pesticides, because some of them produce pesticides. More pesticides are actually needed to fight super bugs that resist the chemicals and the plants.
- 3. That GE crops are more nutritious. The fiasco of the Golden Rice fortified with vitamin A is still fresh in memory.
- 4. That GE crops are the only way to feed the ballooning population of hungry Africans and would increase food production for the growing
- 5. GE crops/organisms are "under the control" by scientists and biotech industry who developed them. Continued contaminations tell us otherwise.
- 6. Increase in yields would reduce the demand for agricultural land.
- 7. Less water is needed to grow them.
- 8. Poor farmers would be core beneficiaries introduction of Bt Cotton to small-scale farmers in South Africa and Burkina Faso has had poor results so far.
- 9. That GE crops are substantially equivalent to natural species. The biotech industry claims that their crops are substantially equivalent to natural

varieties, but if this were so there would be no need for patents. Patents indicate that the products are not natural, but fabrications of the industry.

As you will see from the article on Nigeria's Biosafety Bill, there is a general tendency for political leaders to be lobbied to enact weak laws that allow erosion and contamination of genetic resources, and of course the colonisation of seed systems through patent and related laws.

Because the debate on GMOs goes beyond our borders we include writings by global authorities on the issues: Hans Herren, Vandana Shiva and Bernward Geier. The highly stimulating debate between the Nigerian Minister for Agriculture and Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour is a must read.

We will be glad to receive feed back from you on what you think of the controversial push by modern agricultural biotechnology.

Our third Sustainability Academy was a great success. Sessions were held in Abuja, Bori (Ogoni) and in Makoko (Lagos). We bring you a report of the sessions including photos from the events. Each session was unique and we were so glad to have our Instigator, Firoze Manji with us at all locations.

As usual we also bring you clips from our bookshelf, hoping that you will find the books useful. Do not forget to visit our website to download past editions of Eco-Instigator as well as our other publications.

We hope to see you in one of our events. If you miss the Sustainability Academy, so not miss the Community Dialogues. HOMEF - together we work to promote solidarity, dignity and peace.

Until victory! **Nnimmo Bassey**



By Hans R Herren

n the aftermath of the food crises of 2008 and 2010, policymakers across the world have called for an increase in investments in agricultural research. Especially in Africa, where the majority of the population depends on agriculture as its key income source, increasing agricultural growth is expected to not only yield high returns but also result in pro-poor growth (World Bank 2007).

This strategy is supported by African governments with a commitment to increase the investments in agriculture to 10% of GDP. The International Assessment of Agricultural Science & Technology for Development (IAASTD 2009) and UNEP (2011) Green Economy reports noted the high returns from an increase in public agricultural research investments.

For a number of economic as well as ecological reasons, the Green Revolution (GR) has largely sidestepped the African farmers, while most agricultural research and extension investments went into cash crops. Food needs on the other hand were satisfied with cheap imports. Combined with increases in population growth,

declines in soil fertility, and impacts of global climate change, the continent has failed to increase its productivity over the last decade (World Bank 2007).

Although public investments are now growing again, these are not necessarily flowing into supporting the transition from traditional agriculture to agroecology and organic. Instead they try yet again to implement the flawed GR despite all what is known about its shortcomings.

In line with the GR approach to achieve agricultural growth in Africa, the genetic modification of crops has risen to the forefront and been heralded as a viable alternative—technological and reductionist solution—to the current traditional agriculture methods.

While some of its most vocal proponents (Paarlberg 2008; Collier 2011) contend that biotechnology is currently kept out of African countries at the cost of starving and poor farmers, we argue that numerous and scientifically backed-up agro-ecological alternatives exist to increase

productivity — sustainably and with a proven track record — to the benefit of these small-scale farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. Our position is based on a review of existing studies evaluating the effective and potential benefits from GM technology vs. alternatives in the economic, environmental and social dimensions, with a focus on African farmers.

In addition to the traditional herbicide- and pest-tolerant varieties, GM technologies developed for African farmers include newer generation varieties. One example is a drought-tolerant variety - Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) - managed by the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF). Although it has stimulated high hopes, to this date, however, AATF has yet to release public yield-results from its ongoing trials. Since yield increases from similar genetic modifications were limited in the US, it is very likely that existing local and CIMMYT drought-tolerant varieties supplied to AATF actually might yield better results.

Advancements in seed technologies and sustainable agricultural methods implemented by thousands of East African farmers are effective in not only substantially increasing yields, but at the same time improving soil fertility, increasing soils' abilities to retain moisture, prevent soil erosion, reduce carbon emission, and increase biodiversity among other benefits (see for example Niggli et al. 2009; UNEP 2011; Khan et al. 2008a, b).

In an African low-input environment, sustainable agricultural practices do not only reduce costs of synthetic inputs (i.e. pesticides replaced by push-pull methods), but also increase yields, enhance economic diversification and strengthen household self-sufficiency and food securities (UNEP and UNCTAD 2008, FAO 2007). Furthermore, smallholder farmers can take advantage of both

domestic and international markets for organic and other products derived from such productions.

These multipronged efforts aim at improving the livelihoods of farmers across the scales: moving from soil and the seed to the crop and animals, and finally to the household and the social, economic and ecological sustainability of the region as a whole.

While genetically modified seeds have the potential to save input costs (such as labor) or under optimal conditions increase yields, these solutions do not pay off for the smallholder farmer, as they often demand additional fertilizer use and access to irrigation. Furthermore, the economic costs of potential contaminations are too large given the numerous alternatives that can improve livelihoods. When considering the need for more resilience at the system level in the face of climate change, the solution lies in more system and crop diversity, which goes against the use of a few GMO varieties in mono-cropping and rotation systems.

It is in this context that an eco-social intensification of the traditional agriculture based on both a scientific foundation - and farmers' knowledge offer solutions that are specifically benefiting African smallholders. Given its low demand for capital, the strengthening of continued participatory research in sustainable agriculture - a knowledge-intensive practice - can have a strong benefit for the farmers. It should be the Governments and Development Partners' goal of not only disseminating but also supporting the development of innovative solution to the agricultural production challenges through participatory agro-ecological research and extension.

Given the key issues in raising and maintaining higher agricultural productivity as well as assuring the restoration and maintenance of the key ecosystem services in the face of the combined challenges of climate change, growing demand for quality and quantity of nutrition by an increasing population, the solutions need to address the causes of today's problems. The time for the implementation of the IAASTD recommended new paradigm that places the soil fertility restoration and maintenance, as well as the crop, animal and production system diversity up-front is now. Complex problems as outlined above need complex solution instead of the reductionist ones presented by the promoters of GMOs, pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers. Therefore an agro-ecological agriculture provides a safer, more ecologically, socially and economically sound alternative for the African smallholders as well as all other farmers, irrespective where they are, that care for their land and customers.

Hans R Herren (PhD), President and CEO of the Millennium Institute and Founder and President of the Biovision Foundation, Washington, DC USA and Zurich, Switzerland Samuel Ledermann(PhD), Program Coordination Officer, Biovision Foundation, Zurich/Switzerland



I will not dance to your beat

By Nnimmo Bassey

I will not dance to your beat If you call plantations forests I will not sing with you If you privatise my water I will confront you with my fists If climate change means death to me but business to vou

I will expose your evil greed If you don't leave crude oil in the soil Coal in the hole and tar sands in the land I will confront and denounce you If you insist on carbon offsetting and other do-nothing false solutions

I will make you see red If you keep talking of REDD and push forest communities away from their land I will drag you to the Climate Tribunal If you pile up ecological debt &refuse to pay your climate debt I will make you drink your own medicine If you endorse genetically modified crops And throw dust into the skies to mask the sun I will not dance to your beat Unless we walk the sustainable path And accept real solutions & respect Mother Earth Unless you do I will not & We will not dance to your beat

This poem was written in Cochabamba/Tiquipaya 20 April 2010 and read at the opening ceremony of the World Peoples' Climate Conference Summit



ne of the bills passed by the national assembly that has been gathering dust on the desk of president jonathan is on the national bio-safety management agency. Okay, we do not expect dust on the president's desk, so we may say it is under a pile of files somewhere in that office. In this piece we are arguing that there is no need for the file to remain in the president's office and that he should simply send it back for serious work to be done on it. The "national bio-safety management agency act 2011" needs a critical, open and inclusive review and we are pleased that the president has not endorsed it.

Bio-safety is a serious concern and we recognize the fact that some people may already be taking advantage of an absence of a bill to wreak havoc on our environment and food systems. There may indeed already be genetically modified crops illegally being imported and planted in our farms. With the rise of multi-national retail chains in nigeria many of such products may already be on the shelves. Market surveys and tests conducted by civil society groups over the years have shown the presence of unauthorized products in our markets. This is a thoroughly objectionable situation.

The bill defines bio-safety as "the range of measures, policies and procedures for minimizing potential risks that modern biotechnology may pose to the environment and human health." the major output of modern biotechnology that we

are concerned about are genetically modified organisms (gmos) which the bill defines as "any organism living or non living that possesses a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology."

The global convention by which the world keeps watch over bio-safety issues is the convention on biological diversity (cbd). Health of mother earth foundation (homef) recently hosted an interaction around this convention between experts and farmers. At that engagement many of the farmers said the cbd was too technical and needed to be broken down in simple terms for them to understand and that government should not just endorse such conventions and treaties without taking time to consult with citizens who stand the risk of being affected adversely if necessary and acceptable controls are not in place.

The absence of provision for public consultation is a key flaw in the bio-safety bill sitting in the president's office. Part viii, section 6 of the bill has provisions for public display of applications from individuals or corporations intending to import or introduce gmos into the country. However, section 6(2) of the bill indicates that the announcement of the display of such applications is not mandatory.

Everything in the section is optional. The announcement of where or when the display

would be made is optional as well as whether the agency would convene a public hearing on the matter. In fact the bill does not even say if comments made by members of the public that may get to see the application would be considered. Seeing an application by chance and commenting on it cannot be construed as public consultation.

This disdain for public participation is serious and cannot be overlooked.

The Bill as passed and sent to the President left wide gaps that would ensure that those who wish to pollute our environment get away with slaps on the wrist sort of chastisement. The provision of fines of up to N2.5 million for individuals and N5 million for corporate bodies may appear huge, but they are actually not significant when we consider, as stated in the Bill, the "potential risks that modern biotechnology may pose to the environment and human health." One good point is that where corporate bodies are fined, the directors or officers of the corporation could still be individually liable and may be jailed for periods of not less than 5 years.

The downside of these penalties is that there is no redress for individuals or communities who may be impacted individually or collectively. There are no clear provisions for polluters to be liable and compelled to remediate impacts. Without clear liability and redress provisions we securing our biodiversity will remain challenged. What happens, for example, when damage is irreversible? In October 2010 the Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Bio-safety was adopted and Nigeria cannot overlook it. In the campaign towards the inclusion of liability and redress provisions in the protocol, the Third World Network had argued, "Liability and redress should be substantively provided in the protocol. Without such a regime, the protocol would at best be meaningless, and at worst be irresponsible."

The Bill has provisions for confined field trials and commercial release but is silent on the possibility of large-scale field trials conducted with low or no containment measures. Researches have shown

that there is a huge potential of GMOs to contaminate nearby farms and, by our farming practices, farmers may simply take the seeds home and mix them with natural varieties. Seed sharing and open pollination can lead to very wide unintentional spread of GMOs. Seed sharing is an intrinsic part of our food security web.

Experts fear that from an ecological perspective, GM crops would lead to uncontrolled large-scale spread and persistence of transgenes within the smallholder agricultural systems in Africa. The result would be a disastrous and unpredictable recombination and that would negatively impact on our crop diversity.

The Bill only deals with confined field trials and commercial release.

There are also issues with risk assessment as the Bill does not include criteria for such assessments, nor does it show the need for a clear focus on the effect of the GMO on non-target organisms measured against non-target organisms that exist in Nigeria and are ecologically important to us.

Another big flaw of the Bill is that farmers who will no doubt be very closely affected by the law do not have any space on the governing board of the agency.

We cannot end this short piece without pointing out another fundamental flaw in the Bill that has rightly not been endorsed by the President. The Bill completely ignores the Precautionary Principle of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. African and other governments fought hard for the principle with the hope of protecting their environments, agriculture and food systems. It gives governments power to either decide against approval or to restrict entry of certain organisms in cases of incomplete or controversial knowledge.

In simple terms, the precautionary principle says when in doubt proceed with caution. Such a fundamental and common sense principle cannot be ignored just because some powerful forces want to open the Nigerian environment to GMOs and related products. The catch-up-with-othernations arguments put forward by policy makers in this field are not only puerile but obnoxious.



The Challenge Of Genetic And Threat Engineering FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

enetic engineering does not respect the inherent nature of plants and animals since it treats living things as mere factors of production, to be reconstructed as if they were machines. It therefore runs contrary to the fundamental principles of organic agriculture and is not at all compatible with organic farming.

The application of genetic engineering in conventional agriculture has negative effects on organic agriculture itself (e.g. cross-pollination), which is why the organic movement opposes genetically manipulated organisms in agriculture and food. There is no co-existence possible. Since genetic engineering is strictly banned in organic standards and regulations, certified organic food does offer a fundamental GMO risk reduction for consumers.

Genetic Engineering Runs Counter To The Holistic Principle Of Organic Agriculture

It is not only a fundamental principle, but also the reality of organic agriculture, to optimise the production system as a whole by intensifying the power and creativity of nature. Therefore, the reductionist

approach of genetic engineering does not fit into the objectives and principles of organic agriculture at all.

Genetically engineered breeds and varieties rely on a high input system of agriculture. and will result in even more industrialisation and globalisation of agriculture, which conflicts with the objectives of organic agricultural production and processing, as well as with predominately regional/local marketing objectives.

Genetic engineering introduces a new and ultimate level of risk that is no longer limited in time or space. This is contrary to organic agriculture, which seeks instead to stabilise the production system using natural means. Genetic engineering does not contribute overall to a reduction of chemical inputs. If we look at herbicide tolerant 'Round-up Ready' GMO plant varieties, we actually see an increase in chemical inputs.

The necessary large-scale sale of genetically manipulated varieties and breeds will further destroy what remains of biodiversity. Diseases and hereditary biases will spread much more quickly.

'Patenting of life', which also comes with genetic engineering, represents a further threat to traditional breeding and will therefore bring very negative consequences to organic farming. And finally: genetic engineering does not respect the inherent nature of plants and animals since it treats living things as mere factors of production, to be reconstructed as if they were machines.

What organic agriculture has to offer 'instead'

Organic agriculture principles foster decentralisation, and are based on closed cycle concepts (1). The holistic 'nature' of organic agriculture includes, apart from ecological aspects, economic, social, cultural and gender considerations. Organic agriculture offers flexibility, e.g. with 7-12 year crop rotations, versus monocultures.

It is also more energy efficient and not dependent on 'chemical' inputs (like synthetic fertilisers). Organic agriculture keeps animals and land in a balance. For example, organic cows are fed by and large on what grows on the farm where they live instead of imported feedstuff. Impressive scientific evidence shows that organic agriculture enhances biodiversity and also creates diversified and beautiful landscapes.

Organic agriculture does not contribute further to the ongoing global pollution of the environment and, as a matter of fact, offers a profound environmental risk reduction. As environment needs and our societies look for solutions in this context, organic agriculture can offer an impressive pesticide and GMO risk reduction. No form and practice of agriculture is more defined and, controlled (with guaranteed label schemes) than organic agriculture. Organic agriculture is also economically more profitable for the farmers.

This short profile of the contributions of organic agriculture gives some substance to the claim: 'Organic agriculture is sustainable agriculture put into practice.'

Sustainable "biotechnology"?

Under the name 'sustainable biotechnology', the gene-tech industry is still trying to sell the package of modern biotechnology to countries in the South. Examples include "bio-fertilisers" such as Azolla, bio-pesticides such as pyrethrum, herbal veterinary products etc. However, these so-called 'sustainable biotechnology' products are merely examples of existing non-manipulated organisms that are used within traditional agriculture.

Transnational corporations are very interested in exploiting these resources and traditional knowledge as they offer the opportunity to bring local indigenous knowledge under industrial control through patents, and by the use of seed and genebanks. Production of analogous, synthetic products will be industrially organised, controlled and sold worldwide. These genetically engineered products are often promoted as 'sustainable' products, although such a description is highly misleading.

Conclusions

Genetic engineering is not compatible with organic farming. It runs contrary to the fundamental principles of organic agriculture. Its application outside organic agriculture will also have negative effects on organic agriculture itself, which is why our movement generally opposes GMOs in food and agriculture.

There is no reason to presume that genetically engineered products contribute to a more sustainable agriculture. Indeed, the evidence leads to the opposite conclusion that rather than offering solutions there will be a worsening of existing problems.

You cannot solve the problem with the same kind of thinking that has created the problem (Albert Einstein) ... and that is why we do not need GMO technologies, but the radical paradigm shift which comes with organic agriculture.













Turmoil in Africa:

Uprising or Chaos: A Report of the Third HOMEF Sustainability Academy in Abuja, Bori — Ogoni and Makoko - Lagos.

By Oluwafunmilayo Oyatogun

he Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) held its sustainability academy from May 20 - 24, 2014, visiting three cities over a period of five days. In continuing with the tradition of the academy, one instigator facilitated all three sessions, tailoring each one to the specific audience in that community.

In Abuja, stakeholders in the Nigerian environment, including civil society representatives, farmers and journalists gathered to address the frequent bouts of uprising, revolts and violent conflicts across Africa and the impact of such incidents on the environment. In Bori – Ogoni, the community's long and hard struggle for ecological justice was the backdrop for the session. The Bori session was also co-hosted by Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and the Ogoni Solidarity Forum (OSF).

In the stilt community of Makoko, Lagos State, the final leg was the crowning jewel of the third session of the sustainability academy. The Makoko event was set out to interrogate the various uprising in Africa and to make sense of the implication these have on our environment. Here there was a special focus on the violence that comes from global warming as well as from the property speculators and other forces of disaster capitalism. The overall theme of the entire academy was Turmoil in Africa: Uprising or Chaos?

Our Instigator was Firoze Manji, director of the Pan African Institute Of Thought Works. Firoze Manji holds a PhD in dental surgery, founded Pambazuka News Press and currently directs the Pan African Institute.

He facilitated (and co-edited) the publication of Claim No Easy Victories – the Legacy of Amilcar Cabral as well as Silence Would Be Treason- the Last Writings of Ken Saro-Wiwa. The later was presented at all three session of the Third Sustainability Academy and excerpts from the book were read in all three cities. His works and publications have helped to contextualise historical and current events on the African continent.

The director of HOMEF, Nnimmo Bassey, encapsulated the purpose of the academy in his welcome words during the Bori session:

"When Ken Saro-Wiwa wrote that silence was tantamount to treason he knew what he was saying. When he declared in the dock that We All Stand Before History, he was as prescient as any prophet could be. Today we see clearly that keeping silent in the face of ecological destruction is treason. Ken Saro-Wiwa was a man of many dreams. He was murdered, but as is universally accepted, even if you kill the messenger, you cannot kill the dream. Today we are gathered here to interrogate the turmoil in Africa and seek to find out what the roots are and whether there is are common factors connecting them. We want to ask the questions: when, where and why did the rain begin to drench us. How could storm clouds gather and yet we say there would be no rain? Ken Saro-Wiwa declared this an ecological war."

He also mentioned the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Report of August 4, 2011, which presented a damning assessment of the Ogoni environment. The report uncovered that the Ogoni environment has been so damaged that rather than support lives and livelihoods, it was killing the Ogoni people. The UNEP report confirmed the alarming fact that all the water bodies in Ogoni are polluted with hydrocarbons and a variety of deadly elements including carcinogens. The pollution is so deep that it would require twenty-five years of work to decontaminate the waters so that people can safely drink and use the resources found in them.

Bassey explained that the Sustainability Academy was arranged to provide a space for the examination of the impacts of political crises and uprising on the environment and on environmental policies. As an example of how violent conflicts translate to undesirable environmental outcomes he cited recent calls for the clearing of the Sambisa forest to facilitate locating and recuing of the abducted Chibok girls. While, he commended efforts to locate the girls, he said that the forest is not the enemy or a hindrance to be dominated and the strategy for rescuing the young girls such not include the destruction of a 60,000 square kilometres forest.

He noted the popular #BringBackOurGirls campaign that has gone global and hoped that something can be achieved through the mobilisations that would go on beyond the release of the young girls: "Can a movement against violence become a movement for social, economic and environmental justice? We would waste a great opportunity if we stop at just the massive hashtag-and-photo-shoot campaigns. This is a great moment to build an issues-centred political movement in Nigeria and in Africa. It is time to go beyond the hastag."

Abuja:

In Abuja, policy makers, journalists and other civil society representatives participated in the kick-off session of the Third Sustainability Academy. Nnimmo Bassey expressed concern for the state of political unrest across Africa:

"Wars kill not only directly through bullets and bombs but also through diseases, destruction of the environment and livelihoods, increase in violent crimes, displacement of populations and unsustainable exploitation of resources. Conflicts also open possibilities for the re-colonisation of the continent, on our invitation, in the guise of military and economic assistance. We are seeing this unfolding in our nation and in other nations of Africa."

Reports of HS03

Nnimmo Bassey's welcome address paved the way for the lecture delivered by the lead instigator for this session, Firoze Manji. The instigator began his lecture addressing the sense of despair on the continent due to frequent bouts of political uprising. However, he iterated that African is characterized by the twin brothers of hope and despair with Rwanda, Tunisia, Egypt, Angola and Togo as classic examples of such.

According to Manji, "It has been said that if you want to truly dispossess a people of their resources, you have to dispossess them of their history. We have been disconnected from our history and the danger is that any people without a history have no future."

He concluded by criticizing the use of GDP to measure the economy of nations saying that it is not a measure of production but of extraction (water, oil, agriculture, minerals, etc). According to him, there is a need for Africa to undergo structural democratization to decide our futures. He highlighted the need to build structural solidarity in Africa and take the future in our hands.

Manji's talk was followed by a very interactive session of questions, answers and comments.

Bori-Ogoni

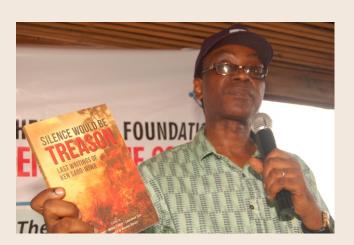
At the Bori session, Fynface D. Fynface and MC Solomon of Bori moderated the program including introducing the guests and the Director of HOMEF who later on introduced the Instigator, Firoze Manji. Officials of MOSOP and youths from Etche community in Rivers State were also introduced.

Nnimmo Bassey opened the session with thoughtprovoking welcome words on the topic under review, fully anchoring it on the Ogoni experience. In his words:

"It is inspiring to see that the seeds sown by the martyrs of the Ogoni struggle continue to fire the imaginations of the marginalised peoples of the world and all those engaged in the epic battles for ecological sanity. Saro-Wiwa was an apostle of peaceful resistance and like others before him the

arrows aimed at him by agents of multinational corporations and the governments that polish their bloody shoes did not cow him. His vision of an Ogoni ethnic nation of proud and dignified people lives on. Today everyone sees the Ogonis and marvel at the tenacity with which you all are committed to peaceful resistance in the face of ecological provocations and extreme pressures including those of land grabbing and outright violence."

The lead instigator, Firoze Manji, took up right from where Nnimmo Bassey left. He began his lecture with an exercise on Ken SaroWiwa's statement – "Silence is Treason", during which the participants expressed their understanding of the statement as pertains to the Ogoni situation of ecological destruction. He went on to mention that financial development and extractive development (mining, extractive and agricultural factory industries) are the two most glorified types of development; none of which contribute to the actual advancement of people and their communities. "They pollute our land and our environment," he said.



Firoze Manji of ThoughtWorks continued:

From the beginning of the slave trade era, the British made a lot of money from sugar factories cultivated by slaves. Gradually, resistance was built and with revolutionaries like Amilcar Cabral, Thomas Sankara and others, the resistance was able to grow into independence from slavery. In Nigeria, similar struggles took place in Ogoniland. It was here they stopped the multinationals from exploitation; it was here that the people stood for justice and it was here that one of your own was sacrificed because of the struggles for justice.



The talk was followed by a discussion session.

capitalists vote every day, every minute and

every second and this is to decide the prices of

Makoko:

food and resources."

The choice of the venue – The Makoko Floating School, was surely a sharp detour from the usual serenity of a conference room as it was hosted on a symbolic venue in clear appreciation to the ingenuity of the people of Makoko having found a way to live in sync with nature despite the changing times and challenges around them. To get to the floating school participants took a canoe ride through the Makoko community – a community built on stilts.

For some of the participants this was their first experience of taking a canoe ride passed fishermen and women, carpenters and other craftsmen working on water. It was indeed an eye opening experience for many who never imagined how the local people live in this "Makoko is a metaphor for resilience in the face of enormous pressures. This community floating on the waters of the Lagos Lagoon is resilient because it is not a rigid community. It is resilient not because the buildings in this community are the strongest in the world but because they are built in sync with nature and not against her. Her resilience is seen in the young boys and girls who ferry us in the boat taxis in order to make enough cash to pay their daily school fees and so access a measure of education."

He continued: "Makoko as a community sitting on water is prone to the impacts of sea level rise that could be triggered by intense rains or by global warming. Flooding is a challenge to Lagos, any day and the state pays a lot of attention to building resilience and also mitigating the impacts. However, Makoko teases the sea by sitting on it. The Floating School in which this session is being held speaks volumes about how to face sea level rise and deflect its sting. The School is designed and built to float. This means that if the sea rises, the building itself rises.

Reports of HS03





This school is designed and built in line with the rhythms of nature and not in defiance of nature like Eko Atlantic does, for instance. The Floating School and the entire Makoko communities show us what resilience means."

In all three sessions, extensive amounts of time were dedicated to questions and discussions among participants. Some questions are particularly striking as they reveal the concerns of participants with regards to the theme. One Abuja participant, Dr. Bell Ihua, asked if capitalism could be executed in a more effective and environmentally conscious manner. In response to the question, Mr. Firoze Manji explained that the system of capitalism is intricately designed to maximize profits and views natural endowments solely as resources. In his words, "we would need to change the name from capitalism if we change that." Ms. Oge Finola asked how the masses can vote as often as the capitalist vote and in similar fashion, Mr. Manji responded that "the continued enhancement of the 16 struggle is the best ballot with which the people vote."



Participants in Bori expressed deep passion for the issue of ecological unrest in the Niger Delta as exemplified by Mr. Harrison F. Baridakaba's question. He asked, "how long should we continue to obey the condition of non-violence?" The director of HOMEF, Mr.

Nnimmo Bassey, in response to the question, urged all participants that "militancy and violence are not only by guns. However, no matter how violent a group becomes, they have to sit down on a table to discuss issues." In Makoko, Lagos, one indigene praised the construction of the Floating School and urged the government to build such sustainable structures in the community.

In concluding the Third Sustainability Academy, HOMEF reiterated our key calls relative to the issues we have been interrogating as follows:

- 1. African leaders must ensure that the continent gets out of the trap of being the arena for proxy wars by interests inimical to the well being of our environment and peoples
- 2. Ecological warfare must not be a tool in the war against terror. In this regard HOMEF endorses the demand: #BringBackOurGirls and adds that they must be brought back to a secure environment devoid of stigmatisation and exploitation in any guise including exploitation as child brides.
- 3. Nigerian and African leaders must protect our environment and peoples from the activities of rampaging resource extractors, ensure that environmental costs do not continue to be externalised to the people/environment and that ecological crimes are severely sanctioned









- 4. African governments must be primarily responsible and accountable to our peoples rather than to international financial institutions and to multinational corporations
- 5. The Nigerian government should scrap the Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Project (HYPREP) and replace it with a National Environmental Restoration Agency (NERA)under the Federal Ministry of Environment, with a mandate to clean up the Nigerian environment including in particular the Ogoni environment as demanded by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report issued three years ago

6. The Makoko

Floating School model should be adopted and replicated across all coastal communities by the Nigerian government as a climate change adaptation measure and to teach the lesson that our architecture must support our ways of life and be in sync with the rhythms of nature.

7. The Nigerian and Lagos State governments should commit to upgrade the Makoko communities and provide support for the communities including by providing adequate health, educational and other services. The community should also be protected from property and financial speculators as well as from other disaster capitalists. •

BOOK SHOULD READ



...and 20 other myths about unions. Drawing on his experiences as a longtimelabor activist and organizer, Fletcher traces the historical roots of these myths and provides an honest assessment of the missteps of the labor movement. He reveals many of labor's significant contributions, such as establishing the forty-hour work week and minimum wage, guaranteeing safe workplaces, and fighting for equity within the workforce. This timely, accessible, "warts and all" book argues, ultimately, that unions are necessary for democracy and ensure economic and social justice for all people.

The final book in Maude Barlow's Blue trilogy, Blue Future is a powerful, penetrating, and timely look at the global water crisis — and what we can do to prevent it. The global water crisis has dramatically deepened. The stage is being set for drought on an unprecedented scale, mass starvation, and the migration of millions of refugees leaving parched lands in search of water. The story does not need to end in tragedy. Blue Future includes inspiring stories of struggle and resistance from marginalized communities, as well as examples of government policies that work for people and the planet. A call to action to create a water-secure world, it is, in the end, a book of hope



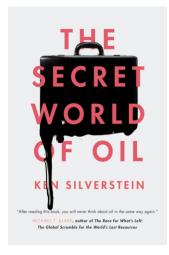


·The Egyptian desert can be a hostile place. Yet in 1977, Dr Ibrahim Abouleish founded a new agricultural and social settlement on seventy hectares of desert land in Belbes, 60 km north east of Cairo. The "Sekem" initiative was born. Dr Abouleish's goals were to build a new type of sustainable community. Nearly thirty years later and Sekem has gone from strength to strength.

William Kamkwamba was born in Malawi, a country where magic ruled and modern science was mystery. It was also a land withered by drought and hunger, and a place where hope and opportunity were hard to find. But William had read about windmills in a book called Using Energy, and he dreamed of building one that would bring electricity and water to his village and change his life and the lives of those around him. His neighbours may have mocked him and called him misala—crazy—but William was determined to show them what a little grit and ingenuity could do.



BOOK SHOULD READ



Oil is the lifeblood of modern civilization, and the industry that supplies it has been the subject of intense interest and scrutiny, as well as countless books. And yet, almost no attention has been paid to little-known characters vital to the industry—secretive fixers and oil traders, lobbyists and PR agents, gangsters and dictators—allied with competing governments and multinational corporations.

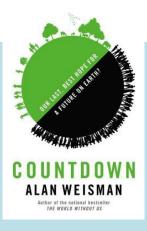
Virtually every stage in oil's production process, from discovery to consumption, is greased by secret connections, corruption, and violence, even if little of that is visible to the public.

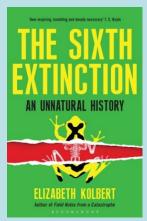
The energy industry, to cite just one measure, violates the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act more often than any other economic sector, even weapons. This book sets out to tell the story of this largely hidden world.

A powerful investigation into the chances for humanity's future from the author of the bestseller The World Without Us.

For this long awaited follow-up book, Weisman traveled to more than 20 countries to ask what experts agreed were probably the most important questions on Earth--and also the hardest: How many humans can the planet hold without capsizing? How robust must the Earth's ecosystem be to assure our continued existence?

Can we know which other species are essential to our survival? And, how might we actually arrive at a stable, optimum population, and design an economy to allow genuine prosperity without endless growth?





She introduces us to a dozen species, some already gone, others facing extinction, including the Panamian golden frog, staghorn coral, the great auk, and the Sumatran rhino. Through these stories, Kolbert provides a moving account of the disappearances occurring all around us and traces the evolution of extinction as concept, from its first articulation by Georges Cuvier in revolutionary Paris up through the present day. The sixth extinction is likely to be mankind's most lasting legacy; as Kolbert observes, it compels us to rethink the fundamental question of what it means to be human.



hen Ken Saro-Wiwa wrote that silence was tantamount to treason he knew what he was saying. When he declared in the dock that We All Stand Before History, he was as prescient as any prophet could be. Today we see clearly that keeping silent in the face of ecological destruction is treason. Keeping silent while the environment and the people die is not just being callous but is plain treason.

He knew the vision of the Ogonis and had no doubts about his mission. He endured personal insults, attacks and pains. He took all that because he desired to see a democratic Nigerian nation where no group or individual is marginalised and where everyone lives in dignity in a environment that is safe and supportive of livelihoods. In the Pantheon of great African and global leaders and although he was not a president of a nation he sits well alongside great visionary African leaders.

20 Ken Saro-Wiwa was a man of many dreams. He

was murdered, but as is universally accepted, even if you kill the messenger, you cannot kill the dream. Today we are gathered here to interrogate the turmoil in Africa and seek to find out what the roots are and whether there is are common factors connecting them. We want to ask the questions: when, where and why did the rain begin to drench us. How could storm clouds gather and yet we say there would be no rain?

One of the regrets of Ken Saro-Wiwa was that he and the Ogoni leaders in the struggle in the early 1990s had not invested enough time in training up cadres and upcoming leaders. He stated this in a number of ways in the communications he was able to smuggle out of prison. He read this in the very last letter he wrote while in detention and which is included in Silence Would Be Treason – The Last Writings of Ken Saro-Wiwa, a book we are proud to present to you today in this historic Ogoni capital city, Bori. Permit me to quote him on this:

One source of worry is what will happen to our struggle when Ledum and I are put away. We had not had enough time to train the cadres or put alternative leaderships in place. And putting members of the Steering Committee on the police wanted list has deprived us of a lot of hands. I have been able to direct things and even contribute to the publicity war from detention. I don't know if I'll be able to do so from prison. We have no funds, not even a bank account. Everything had hinged so much upon my resources that my absence will cause a lot of problems. We'll have to get around that somehow.

It is inspiring to see that the seeds sown by the martyrs of the Ogoni struggle continue to fire the imaginations of the marginalised peoples of the world and all those engaged in the epic battles for ecological sanity. Saro-Wiwa was an apostle of peaceful resistance and like others before him the arrows aimed at him by agents of multinational corporations and the governments that polish their bloody shoes did not cow him. His vision of an Ogoni ethnic nation of proud and dignified peoples lives on. Today everyone sees the Ogonis and marvel at the tenacity with which you all are committed to peaceful resistance in the face of ecological provocations and extreme pressures including those of land grabbing and outright violence.

It is heart warming that the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) continues to hold up the banner announcing the possibilities of a restored Ogoni environment, attainment of political and economic emancipation of our peoples and securing our collective dignity as peoples. We see other organisations working towards the same ends in Ogoni and in other parts of the Niger Delta and the entire Nigerian nation and we dare to believe that the labour of our heroes past will never be in vain indeed.

On 4 August 2014 it will be three years since the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) issued its damning report on the state of the Ogoni environment. The report uncovered

that the Ogoni environment has been so damaged that rather than support lives and livelihoods, it was killing the Ogoni people. The UNEP report confirmed the alarming fact that all the water bodies in Ogoni are polluted with hydrocarbons and a variety of deadly elements including carcinogens. The pollution is so deep that it would require twenty-five years of work to decontaminate the waters so that people can safely drink and use the resources found in them. The report also revealed that the land in Ogoni is polluted to a depth of five metres in several places and would require five years to clean up before the waters can be cleaned.

Ken Saro-Wiwa declared that what was happening in Ogoni was an ecological war. That may have appeared as a very strong way to describe the situation, but you and I agree that he has been vindicated. That war is not over. It will not be over until our children can safely swim again in our rivers and creeks. It will not be over until our people can fish, collect crabs, periwinkles and other seafood and eat them with assurance of nourishment and not death by instalment. The ecological war will not be over until our farmers can plant and harvest yams and cassavas that are safe to eat and are not covered in hydrocarbon pollutants. The ecological war in still on! It must stop!

The ecological war remains on as the days go by and the UNEP report remains unimplemented in a real sense. Erecting signposts reminding us that our communities are polluted does not say where our people should relocate to or whether the contaminants are being cleared. Surely three years is enough for any serious work to have commenced on the detoxification of Ogoni environment.

The UNEP report was an alarm bell signifying that the petroleum sector's footprint in the Niger Delta is deadly and cannot be ignored. The harm done cannot be wished away. It must be confronted and dealt with. The ecological war in still on! It can be stopped!



The same can be said of the polluting extractive activities in other parts of Nigeria and indeed Africa. The tin mines of Plateau State were abandoned without decommissioning. The environment remains toxic and over 1100 sinkholes there continue to pose grave danger to man and beasts. The environment of the coalmines of Enugu and Kogi States begs for restoration. The same is the situation with the gold mines of Obuasi, Ghana, the coal mines of Witbank in South Africa and the diamond mines of Kono in Sierra Leone, to mention a few.

Many of the conflicts in Africa do not happen because we are bloodthirsty tribal peoples that are always at conflict with ourselves. No. Many are proxy wars fought on the behalf of agents of resource expropriation and transnational resource thieves. Outright wars and terror across the continent are fought so that arms merchants can ply their bloody trade while our peoples wave weapons produced by merchants of death who laugh all the way to the bank while we abduct young girls, kill children in their sleep, burn down villages and soak in the blood of our children, 22 mothers and fathers.

Welcome to the third Sustainability Academy of Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF). We are looking at Turmoil in Africa: Uprising or Chaos? The Instigator, Firoze Manji, director of the Pan African Institute Of ThoughtWorks, has done deep work on the issue and he will lead us in this session. He facilitated (and co-edited) the publication of Claim No Easy Victories - The Legacy of Amilcar Cabral as well as Silence Would Be Treason- The Last Writings of Ken Saro-Wiwa. He is here to help us make sense of the conflicts raging in Africa, their historical origins and their ecological impacts.

On this first anniversary of HOMEF we are proud to have Firoze with us in Ogoni. Our Sustainability Academies are arenas for dialogues, holistic ecological trainings and interrogations. Let us continue the interrogations.

(Welcome words by Nnimmo Bassey, Director HOMEF, at Sustainability Academy #03 held in Bori, Ogoni on 22 May 2014.)



Have Control of the C

HOMEF just published two booklets that would get you thinking. And YOU can download free copies at www.homef.org.

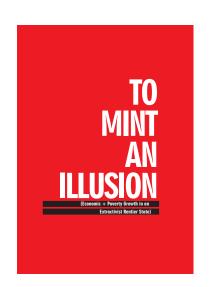
To MINT an Illusion

This publication is brand new from HOMEF and details the story of Economic and Poverty growth in an extractivist rentier state. To MINT an Illusion can be downloaded on our website at http://www.homef.org/publication/mint-illusion

Re-Source Democracy

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eco-INSTIGATOR











Fine Print Of The Food Wars

reating 'ownership' of seed through patents and intellectual property rights and imposing it globally through the WTO, the biotech industry has established a monopoly empire over seed and food. Monsanto and friends, the biotech industry, its lobbyists and its paid media representation continue to push for monopoly control over the world's food through its seed supply.

This "empire" is being built on false foundations: that Monsanto is a creator/inventor of life and hence can own the seed through patents and that life can be engineered and machined like an iPhone.

Through ecology and the new biology we know that life is self-organised complexity — life makes itself; it cannot be "manufactured". This also applies to food production through the new science of agroecology.

Agroecology gives us a deeper scientific understanding of how ecological processes work at the level of soils, living seeds and living food. The promises made by the biotechindustry — of increased yields, reduction of chemical use and control of weeds and pests — have not been kept. Last month an investment fund sued DuPont for \$1 billion for 24pushing herbicide-resistant crops knowing fully well

they would fail to control weeds and instead contribute to the emergence of "superweeds".

Creating "ownership" of seed through patents and intellectual property rights and imposing it globally through the World Trade Organisation, the biotech industry has established a monopoly empire over seed and food. While they claim ownership of the seeds they sell and collect royalties, when it comes to checks and balances on safety, the biotech industry is systematically destroying international and national laws on biosafety claiming their products are "as nature made them".

It's ontological schizophrenia!

Biosafety is the multi-disciplinary assessment of the impact of genetic engineering on the environment, on public health and on socio-economic conditions. At the international level, biosafety is international law enshrined in the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. I was appointed to an expert group to evolve the framework by the United Nations environment programmme to implement Article 19.3 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Monsanto and friends have been attempting to deny citizens the right to safe food by opposing Article 19.3 since the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992.

Currently they are attempting to dismantle national laws on biosafety in India, Pakistan, the European Union, across Africa and Latin America. In the United States, they are distorting the Constitution by suing state governments that have passed labelling laws for GMO (genetically modified) foods by claiming that the citizens' right to know what they eat is superseded by the biotech industry's right to impose hazardous foods on uninformed consumers as the freedom of speech of a corporation, as if it were a natural person.

Their PR machine is deployed to unscientifically attack scientists working on biosafety, such as ÁrpádPusztai, Ignacio Chapela, Irina Ermakova, ÉricSéralini and myself. Many journalists, having no scientific background themselves, have become soldiers in this PR assault. Privileged white men like Mark Lynas, Jon Entine and Michael Specter, with no practical experience in agriculture, armed only with BA degrees and ties to corporate-controlled media, are being used to undermine real scientific findings about the impact of GMOs on our health and ecosystems.

Biotech industry uses its PR puppets to falsely claim that GMOs are a solution to world hunger. This denialism of real scientific debate about how living systems evolve and adapt, is backed by an aggressive and massive PR assault, including the use of intelligence agencies such as Blackwater.

In 2010, Forbes named me one of the seven most powerful women in the world for "putting women front and centre to solve the issue of food security in the developing world". In 2014, Jon Entine, a journalist, wrote an "opinion" piece on the Forbes website, falsely claiming that I have not studied physics. While I have studied physics at a post-graduate level and done my doctorate on the foundations of quantum theory, I have spent 40 years studying ecology in India's farms and forests, with nature and wise peasants as my teachers. This is the basis of my expertise in agroecology and biosafety.

Good science and proven technologies do not need PRs, intelligence agencies or corrupt governments to prove the facts. If unfounded attacks on a scientist from a developing country by a non-scientist is one of their tools in shaping the future, they have got it all wrong. They don't see the growing citizens' outrage against Monsanto's monopoly.

In sovereign countries, where the might of Monsanto and friends is limited, the people and their governments are rejecting their monopoly and failed technology. But this news is suppressed by the PR machine.

Russia has completely banned GMOs with deputy prime minister Dmitry Medvedev saying, "If the Americans like to eat GMO products, let them eat it then. We don't need to do that; we have enough space and opportunities to produce organic food". China has banned GMOs in military food supplies. Italy has just passed a law, Campo libre, making planting GMO crops punishable with a prison sentence of one to three years and a fine of 10,000-30,000 euros. Italian minister of agriculture Nunzia De Girolamo said in a statement: "Our agriculture is based on biodiversity, on quality, and we must continue to aim for these without ventures that, even from the economic point of view, wouldn't make us competitive."

PR pieces in Forbes and the New Yorker cannot stop the awakening of millions of farmers and consumers to the very real dangers of genetically-modified organisms in our food and the shortcomings and failures of the industrial food system which is destroying the planet and our health.

Dr. Vandana Shiva is the executive director of the Navdanya Trust

This article was first published at http://www.asianage.com/columnists/fine-print-food-wars-538



NEWS:

London High Court rules that Shell Nigeria could be legally liable for bunkering. (Culled from Leighday.co.uk)

In a groundbreaking legal ruling, the London High Court today decided that Shell Nigeria could be legally liable for illegal bunkering of its pipelines, if it failed to take reasonable steps to protect its infrastructure.

The judgment follows a 'preliminary issues hearing', which took place in May this year, which considered a range of complex legal arguments prior to a full trial in 2015.

The central issue being argued was whether Shell should take reasonable steps to protect its infrastructure given the foreseeable risk of bunkering, illegal hacking into pipelines to steal the oil.

This is the first time Shell has had to face formal Court proceedings in the UK for its environmental record in the Niger Delta, following two massive oil spills in 2008 and 2009 which resulted in the largest loss of mangrove habitat ever caused by an oil spill.

The legal action is being taken by London law firm Leigh Day which is representing 15,000 Nigerian fishermen and the Bodo Community, which was devastated by the oil spills, in one of the largest environmental law cases ever brought.

At the hearing in front of Mr Justice Akenhead, the President of the Technological and Construction Court, Leigh Day argued that under the Nigerian Oil Pipelines Act anyone who suffered damage can claim compensation if they can show Shell was guilty of neglect in failing to 'protect, maintain or repair' the pipeline.

They argued that Shell has duty of care to take reasonable steps to protect their pipelines and that they could do much more to prevent the spillage of oil when their pipelines are drilled into by criminal gangs. The Judge found that whilst Shell did not have an obligation to provide policing or military defence (which is the function of the state) it could be legally liable if it has failed to take other reasonable steps to protect the pipeline such as the use of appropriate technology (leak detection systems), a system of 26 effective surveillance and reporting to the police and

the provision of anti-tamper equipment

At paragraph 92(g) the Court held:

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"Short of a policing or military or paramilitary defence of the pipelines, it is my judgment that the protection requirement within Section 11(5)(b) involves a general shielding and caring obligation. An example falling within this would be the receipt by the licensee of information that malicious third parties are planning to break into the pipeline at an approximately definable time and place; protection could well usually involve informing the police of this and possibly facilitating access for the police if requested. Other examples may also fall within the maintenance requirement such as renewing protective coatings on the pipeline or, with the advent of new and reliable technology, the provision of updated anti-tamper equipment which might give early and actionable warning of tampering with the pipeline."

Thousands of oil spills have occurred over the 50 years of Shell's operations; many have never been cleaned up adequately. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), more than 6,800 spills were recorded between 1976 and 2001. The number of spills has significantly increased in recent years and Shell recorded 3,000 spills between 2007 and 2012.

However, according to Leigh Day, Shell continues to under report the severity of oil spills in Nigeria and blames the bunkerers' for the great majority of them. They have consistently maintained that they have no legal responsibility for the effects of "bunkered" oil.

Speaking after the hearing, Martyn Day the senior partner at Leigh Day who is representing the Bodo Community, said:

"This is a highly significant judgment. For years, Shell has argued that they are only legally liable for oil spills which are caused by operational failure of their pipelines and that they have no liability for the devastation caused by bunkered oil.

"This judgment entirely undermines that defence and states in clear terms that Shell does have potential liability if it fails to take reasonable steps to protect its pipelines."



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The oil devastated the environment surrounding the community of Bodo, in Gokana Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria.

The Bodo community is a rural coastal settlement consisting of 31,000 people who live in 35 villages. The majority of its inhabitants are subsistence fishermen and farmers.

Expert evidence indicates 1,000 hectares of mangroves have been destroyed by the spills and a further 5,000 hectares have been impacted. This represents the largest loss of mangrove habitat ever caused by an oil spill. Wakem

In 2011 Shell admitted liability for the spills but continues to dispute the amount of oil spilled and the extent of the damage caused.

Leigh Day began the multi-million pound legal action at the High Court in March 2012 after talks broke down over compensation and a clean up package for the community.

Until the two 2008 spills Bodo was a relatively prosperous town based on fishing. According to the claimants' lawyers the spills have destroyed the fishing industry. They claim Shell has failed to speedily compensate the people of Bodo and have delayed and prevaricated for years. Astonishingly, the clean up of the 2008 oil spills has still not commenced.

The United Nations, Amnesty International and the Nigerian government have all expressed deep disappointment with Shell's lack of action in the region.

The 'United Nations Environment Programmes Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland 2011 backed up these findings. It surveyed pipelines and visited all oil spill sites, including the Bodo creek. It found Hydrocarbon contamination in water in some sites to be 1,000 times higher than permitted under Nigerian drinking water standards and recommended a comprehensive clean up of Ogoniland.

However, three years after the UNEP report nothing has happened and so recourse to foreign Courts is the only option for impoverished and devastated Nigerian communities.

Pyramid Wonder

isitors from around the world come to see one of these wonders of the ancient world.

It's still a wonder, when you think about the amount of resources that we use to build these massive structures, each one housing just one dead body. I believe that when people in future - if there would be people in future - look back at what we are building right now they will wonder, just like we wonder about what these things were built for.

Some of the things we do are clearly unsustainable, and we don't want to build monuments for historians in future to wonder about. We should build things that help people to live better now and in the future.

Nnimmo Bassey on Egyptian Pyramids and Wonders of the World.





eco-INSTIGATOR DEBATE



The Debate on GMOs: Ministers and Stakeholders Disagree on Genetically Modified Foods.

(This debate was initially published in the Guardian in June, 2014)

inister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. AkinwumiAdesina recently, on the ministry's website responded to an article in The Guardian written by Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour on Monsanto, Genetically Modified Foods and why Nigerians should be wary. Also, Monsanto (a publicly traded American multinational agrochemical and agricultural biotechnology corporation headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, USA) has reacted to the articles written by Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour and IfyAniebo on the subject.

THE reactions and counter-reactions follow

The Minister, on Monday, June 2, 2014 wrote:

"I read this and was shocked at the level of total misrepresentation. There is nothing correct in all this write up. I normally don't respond to these kind of things, but feel Gbadebo should be educated on facts. First, Nigeria does not have GMOs. Second, all the seeds used by farmers in Nigeria are from conventional breeding, and we allow farmers to reuse their own seeds. Third, we support biodiversity and promote both insitu and ex-situ gene banks for ensuring local biodiversity is conserved. Fourth, we promote sensible and responsible use of modern technologies to address complex problems of diseases and pest, climate change and malnutrition.

The author unfortunately confuses biotechnology with GMOs, which is done to deliberately misinform the population. He does not understand science. Noise is not fact nor science. Through conventional breeding and biotechnology we have safe nutrient enriched crops such as pro-vitamin A cassava, orangeflesh sweet potato, drought resistant maize, flood resistant rice and bananas resistant to virulent black sigatoka disease that can wipe out all of Nigeria's and Africa's bananas, and cassava varieties resistant to cassava bacterial blight that can wipe out Africa's largest source of food. Does he expect us to fold our hands and do nothing and watch poor farmers go into such devastation?

All the seed companies in Nigeria use conventional breeding. Nigeria is putting in place bio safety laws to regulate use of modern biotechnology. Consumer and environmental safety are priority for us. But we must develop and we must use new technologies. Responsible use of technologies, while managing and preserving biodiversity and the environment and consumer safety is the role of government.

As Minister of Agriculture for Nigeria, I assure you that this is being done. But we must not become misinformed by those that want Africa to remain backward, with misguided anti-technology views.

To communicate, you can use mobile phone (despite associated risks with brain cancer) or tie strings to match boxes or use town criers as done in old times. The former is modern technology. I am sure the writer uses mobile phones, yet it has risks! Why not try communicating with matchboxes with strings: after all, it is a safe technology! You can travel by plane or donkey. The former generates CO2, but everyone uses it to travel. Why not try traveling to Europe by donkey?

We must be factual, sensible and responsible in our reporting. Nigeria is working hard to empower its millions of farmers with appropriate technologies to lift them out of poverty into wealth. Over 95% of all our agribusinesses are locally owned companies. I believe in food sovereignty, that is why I am pushing daily for Nigeria to be free from dependence on food imports to feed ourselves. We will feed ourselves

with dignity; lift millions of our people out of poverty. But scare mongering with deliberate misinformation as done by Gbadebo and similar anti-technology apologists is not the way to go. His assertions are totally misguided and misinformed.

Unless Africa uses modern technologies, our farmers' output will remain low and we will remain dependent on others to feed us. That is definitely not the way to have food sovereignty. That will only deepen dependency on others. We must feed ourselves with dignity and we must use appropriate modern technologies to do so, give choices to farmers, while preserving biodiversity, building environmental resilience, robust ecosystems and protecting health and well being of our people.

That is exactly what we are doing.

*Response by Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour

With all due respect, Mr.Adesina's response aside from being vague and empty has not addressed any concerns raised by my article. In playing politics with the Nigerian people, he has spoken about everything except the ELEPHANT in the room.

Mr.Adesina asserts, "Nigeria does not have GMOs."

Sir, WHAT IS MONSANTO DOING IN NIGERIA? In the month of May 2014, an article titled



"Government okays introduction of 40 hybrid seeds in Nigeria" was published in The Guardian newspaper. Another article titled "Monsanto to introduce 40 new seed varieties," was also published and Monsanto's vice president, Michael Frank was quoted as saying that MONSANTO would focus on maize, soybean, cotton and oil-grape seed production in Nigeria.

According to the NABDA boss (Nigeria Biotechnology Development Agency), Nigeria already has three genetically engineered crops in confined field trial. He names them as BT cowpea in Zaria, the African bio-fortified sorghum also in Zaria and the cassava plus at the National Root Crops Institute at Umudike, Abia State. The Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR) in Zaria in association with Monsanto and CSIRO in Australia have created Bt Cowpea using genes derived from the soil bacterium, Bacillus thuringiensis (which was provided by Monsanto) and have carried out field trials (Ezezika&Dall, 2012).

Mr. Minister there is nothing conventional or natural about Monsanto Transgenic modifications, neither is there anything natural about inserting DNA from bacteria into cowpea. It is clear from these experiments and associations that Nigerian agencies and institutes have become mere surrogates for experimentation on behalf of foreign/commercial interests.

Adesina asserts, "All the seeds used by farmers in Nigeria are from conventional breeding, and we allow farmers to reuse their own seeds"

Is that the Monsanto Model? There are so many case studies around the world that proves that this is not Monsanto's model. Prof.Iwu had this to say about the Monsanto Model.

"One of the things they do and they do badly is that they will bring these things, they will give our farmers seeds for example and they will plant these seeds. Regardless of whether the seeds are safe or not you cannot replant the seeds the next year. You will go back and start 30 buying from them and after a while there will be total dependency. And these things can be

airborne and they can destroy our farms and so on." Prof. Maurice Iwu, a professor of pharmacognosy at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN)

Nnimmo Bassey had this to say about the Monsanto model,

"We cannot be force-fed by a savage biotech industry that seeks to colonize African seeds and food systems. The fact that GMOs will not feed the world is well studied and documented. See the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) report, for example. GMOs will enslave the world through the intellectual property rights that allows the biotech industry to patent their seeds, debars farmers from sharing or saving seeds and forces them to buy seeds every planting season. It seeks to overturn age long sustainable practices."

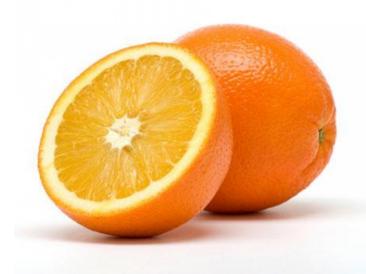
Nnimmo Bassey Nigerian environmentalist, Chair of Friends of the Earth International 2008-2012

So, again I ask WHAT IS MONSANTO DOING IN NIGERIA?

Mr.Adesina asserts, "Nigeria is putting in place bio safety laws to regulate use of modern biotechnology. Consumer and environmental safety are priority for us." Aniebo had this to say about the consumer and environmental safety of Monsanto GMO.

"The few scientific researches done on the effects of these foods on humans have showed stunted growth, impaired immune systems, bleeding stomachs, abnormal and potentially precancerous cell growth in the intestines, impaired blood cell development, misshaped cell structures in the liver, pancreas and testicles, altered gene expression and cell metabolism, liver and kidney lesions, partially atrophied livers, inflamed kidneys, less developed organs, reduced digestive enzymes, higher blood sugar, inflamed lung tissue, increased death rates and higher offspring mortality as well.





After GM soy was introduced in the UK, allergies from the product skyrocketed by 50 percent, and in the U.S. in the 1980s, a GM food supplement killed dozens and left five to 10 thousand others sick or disabled. Repeated use of seeds like Monsanto's Roundup-Ready soybeans results in vicious new super-weeds that need far greater amounts of stronger herbicides to combat. Their toxic residues remain in crops that humans and animals then eat. Even small amounts of these toxins are endocrine disruptors that can affect human reproduction adversely. Most recently, tests showed the presence of the herbicide glyphosate, widely used with Monsanto's herbicide-tolerant GM soybean and maize varieties, in samples of mothers' breast milk in the United States."

IfyAniebo (B Sc, MSc, MRes, MPH) is a molecular geneticist from Oxford University, with a master's in public health. She was also recognized by Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan during the centenary celebrations as an inventor and innovator.

Again I ask: What is Monsanto doing in Nigeria?

The minister presents the bio-safety law as an infrastructure that would look out for the interest of Nigerians by rigorously testing GMO products to ensure they are safe for consumption as well as the ecosystem. Here is what the Chairman, Senate committee on science and technology, Prof. Robert Boroffice, had to say on the Bio-Safety bill.

"I can speak authoritatively that Mr. President

will be anxious to enact a bio-safety law, when he gets the passed bill before him, for the interest of the country, he will sign, So, that Monsanto and other countries can come to Nigeria to assist us in boosting agricultural production not only in food but also in area of cotton, cowpea, maize, tomatoes."

Somehow before the bill has been passed it is clear Monsanto has Pre-qualified? Is that how a Bio-safety bill should work Mr. Minister? It is clear that this Bio-safety bill is nothing more than a gateway to guarantee Monsanto's entry in to Nigeria. This coupled with the minister's framework (which is available online) makes it clear the focus is on big business as opposed to the safety and welfare of the Nigerian people.

Mr.Adesina asserts, "We must not become misinformed by those that want Africa to remain backward, with misguided anti-technology views."

Let's see how Monsanto GMO has fared in other parts of the world. In India for example, Monsanto crop failures are linked to the suicides of 300,000 cotton farmers.

According to physicist and author Vandana Shiva, Monsanto's contributions to a "suicide economy" in India, such as an increase in the price per kilogram of cotton seeds from 7 to 17,000 rupees. Shiva lists additional complications:

"Indigenous cotton varieties can be intercropped with food crops. Monsanto's Bt-cotton can only be grown as a monoculture. Indigenous cotton is rain fed. Bt-cotton needs irrigation. Indigenous varieties are pest resistant. Bt-cotton, even though promoted as resistant to the bollworm, has created new pests, and to control these new pests, farmers are using 13 times more pesticides then they were using prior to introduction of Bt-cotton. And finally, Monsanto sells its GMO seeds on fraudulent claims of yields of 1500/kg/year when farmers harvest 300-400 kg/year on an average."

According to HRH Prince Charles of England:

The crisis, branded the 'GM Genocide' by campaigners, was highlighted recently when Prince Charles claimed that the issue of GM had become a 'global moral question' – and the time had come to end its unstoppable march. He condemned 'the truly appalling and tragic rate of small farmer suicides in India, stemming... from the failure of many Monsanto GM crop varieties.'

In Brazil, five million Brazilian farmers are locked in a lawsuit with US-based biotech giant Monsanto, suing for as much as 6.2 billion Euros. "Monsanto gets paid when it sell the seeds. The law gives producers the right to multiply the seeds they buy and nowhere in the world is there a requirement to pay (again). Producers are in effect paying a private tax on production," Jane Berwanger, lawyer for the farmers in the latest installment of the legal battle erupting in South America, the Brazilian court has ruled in favor of the Brazilian farmers, saying Monsanto owes them at least US\$2 billion.

So I ask for the umpteenth time Sir, what is Monsanto doing in Nigeria?

Mr.Adesina uses a simplistic analogy to trivialize our health concerns in relation to risks associated with GM technology. He speaks of donkeys and planes, phones and matchboxes.

Dr. Adesina, Prof.Borrofice, have two million

people marched against the airline industry or one Airline Company? Have two million people marched against the mobile phone industry? The answer is a resounding NO. Two million people all around the world in 436 cities have marched against Monsanto globally protesting the negative health effects and harm their technology does to human beings and the environment. Why? Because the risks associated with this technology far outweighs the benefits.

But I'll humour you, let's say those two million people and everyone I have quoted in this article is anti-science and needs in your words "educating", Are the 6 countries of the G8 antiscience too?

Is the Technology Powerhouse – Japan antiscience? Yet they banned GMOS and have strong bio-safety laws PREVENTING and INHIBITING the importation of GMO products in to their country. France and Manufacturing powerhouse Germany banned Monsanto cultivation and GMO products. Italy banned cultivation of Monsanto and GM products. England does not allow cultivation of Monsanto crops and only allows GM products in to the country as animal feed and even this is under scrutiny. Lastly, the world super power Russia banned all Monsanto products as well as GM products entering the country.

In the words of the Russian Prime minister, Medvedev

"If the Americans like to eat GMO products, let them eat it then. We don't need to do that; we have enough space and opportunities to produce organic food,"

While our Minister and Senator are trying to pass a bill to allow Monsanto to come in to Nigeria, Russia is passing a bill to treat producers of biotech crops from companies such as Monsanto, The Dow Chemical Company, and Syngenta as criminals, with fines comparable to terrorism. As co-author of the bill Kirill Cherkasov said,

"When a terrorist act is committed, only several people are usually hurt. But GMOs may hurt dozens and hundreds. The consequences are much worse. And punishment should be proportionate to the crime."

So the question remains and I ask again: What Is Monsanto doing in Nigeria?

Mr. Minister, Mr. Senator, Do you have as robust infrastructure as Russia, Japan or France? Do you plan to set it up overnight? Do you have the scientific infrastructure to monitor Monsanto? Mr. Minister you clearly need to educate the leaders of all these great nations as well once you are done educating me. Do you have more scientists at your disposal than France, Germany or Japan? Or are we basing our policy on America and what America tells us is safe? A nation, which is controlled by 'Profit at any cost corporations'?

A speech made by US Rep Dennis Kucinich on the house of congress floor:

"In 1992 the Food and Drug Administration decided that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are the functional equivalent of

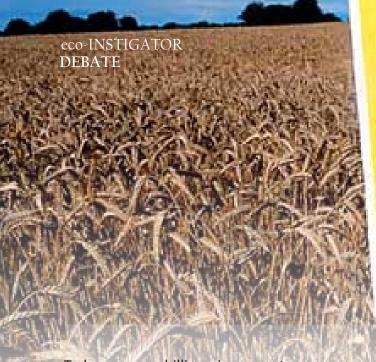
conventional foods. They arrived at this decision without testing GMOs for allergenicity, toxicity, anti-biotic resistance and functional characteristics. As a result hundreds of millions of acres of GMO crops were planted in America without the knowledge or consent of the American people: no safety testing and no longterm health studies. The FDA (America's version of NAFDAC) has received over a million comments from citizens demanding labelling of GMOs. Ninety percent of Americans agree. So, why no labelling? I'll give you one reason: The influence and the corruption of the political process by Monsanto. Monsanto has been a prime mover in GMO technology, a multi-million dollar GMO lobby here and a major political contributor.'

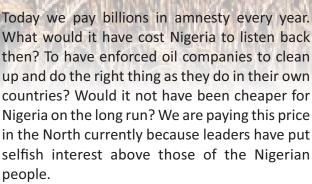
Mr.Adesina asserts, "Unless Africa uses modern technologies, our farmers' output will remain low and we will remain dependent on others to feed us"

On this I agree with Mr. Minister, So I ask, Sir have you fully mechanized the Nigerian Agriculture sector? Do farmers have access to funding in the form of soft loans? Of all the money purportedly set aside for the agricultural sector, how many farmers have ACTUALLY accessed those funds? How is Nigeria doing with regards to the Maputo declaration? You clearly have a reference for what optimum productivity should be... do Nigerian farmers get subsidized like their European or American counterparts? Do they? Yet according to the IMF, in its largest countries by agricultural output at Purchasing Power Parity, Nigeria is ranked No 5, second to the USA which is ranked No 4 and all this was achieved without machinery and without access to funds or subsidies like their American counterparts.

Clearly giving them all that is too much work, so you propose magic seeds? Nigeria is dependent on imports not only due to previous issues raised, but also the fact that we do not process our products e.g. rice. Till today Nigeria a nation is boasting about\$900million revenue from the export of raw cocoa. Raw Cocoa in the 21st century, Cocoa has made men fortunes since the 1800s yet we still export raw cocoa. Mars Inc made \$30billion annual turnover and that is just one chocolate company. Ignoring all the byproducts of Cocoa processing surely it would make a lot more sense for Nigeria to at least process her cocoa?

Nigerian leadership has to evolve from its Fire brigade paradigm in which it favors Corporations and special interest to exploit the nation at the detriment of its people. Case in point, The Niger Delta people complained for years concerning the destruction of their land, their waters, they could not feed themselves. Leadership ignored their calls. Champions of their cause lost their lives. Nigeria behaved as though the oil was for Nigeria but the oil spill was for the Niger delta. It was only when these people after years of complaints took up guns that Nigerian leadership paid attention.



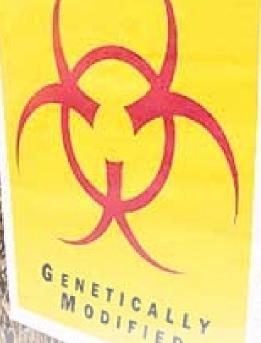


Argentina the poster child of Monsanto is currently experiencing what I just spoke of. Research released from communities around farms where Monsanto is implementing its technology showed an increase in risk for defects at birth due to exposure to pesticides in mothers. The specific defects included were limb reduction, urogenital anomalies, CNS defects, or facial clefts, heart conditions, and ocular defects.

So again I ask: What Are Monsanto And The Likes Doing In Nigeria?

When full mechanization of Nigerian agriculture is achieved, extension service to farmers increased to meet world standards and farmers have access to loans, Nigeria will feed herself independently without the need to resort to GMO.

Monsanto and the likes have no business in Nigeria and the Bio-safety Bill should not be passed because it is merely a charade to get Monsanto into the country. I tell you why two million people march against Monsanto and not cell phone companies. Food and water are the 34 most basic requirements for human life





God in his wisdom made our sources of food renewable. Monsanto through its patent laws and systems seeks to own, control and charge for what has been given to us freely. This makes Nigeria dependent on foreign biotech firms to feed. So Mr. Minister there is no confusion here, this is what we stand against. The fact that six out of the eight countries that make up the G8 have banned the cultivation of GM foods for consumption in their own countries but formed an alliance to promote and fund this initiative in our country is something every Nigerian needs to ponder on.

On June 6, Monsanto responded to Rhodes-Vivour's article (earlier published in The Guardian) on their blog (http://monsantoblog.eu/nigerian-paper-sowsmisinformation-on-gm-and-hybrid-seeds/) in a post titled -Nigerian paper sows misinformation on GM and hybrid seeds.

Hereunder is R-Vivour's counter-reaction entitled:

Why we must reject Monsanto's Trojan horse, R-Vivour.

Monsanto and its imperial agents such as a Mr. Abdallah el-Kurebe disappointingly don't address any concerns raised instead focus on the fact that I am an architect.

Monsanto says: "Let's leave aside the obvious question of whether architects, however qualified, should be considered authorities on anything other than building design."

To Monsanto and Mr. Kurebe, I ask: Did Awolowo study education? Or was he a teacher? No, yet we know his effect on the educational system. Did Obasanjo study agriculture or farming? Yet we know his success as a farmer and I won't talk about the late great Ibrahim Tahir (Talba of Bauchi). Attacking the messenger from the onset shows the inferiority and weakness of your argument.

Mr. Monsanto, after belittling my article as a 'rant', speaks about a statement I made with regards to genetically modified tomatoes. "Many of the accusations in Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour's rant lack any credible substantiation, or are just downright bizarre. For example, his claim that biotech tomatoes (which don't exist, btw) can become toxic and cause cancer."

YES, they don't exist now, but Mr. Monsanto conveniently does not mention why.

The first commercially available genetically modified food was a tomato engineered to have a longer shelf life (the FlavrSavr).

"Rats fed genetically engineered CalgeneFlavr-Savr tomatoes (developed to look fresh for weeks) for 28 days got bleeding stomachs (stomach lesions) and seven died and were replaced in the study." Food Safety-Contaminants and Toxins. Reviewed in J.P.F. D'Mello, CABI Publishing, 2003.

In October 1991, Dr. Edwin Mathews from the Department of Health and Human Services and of the FDA's Toxicology Group wrote to the FDA Biotechnology Working Group saying: "Genetically modified plants could also contain unexpected high concentrations of plant toxicants".

In a memo dated 16 June 1993 to Linda Kahl, Consumer Safety Officer at the Food and Drug Administration - FDA (America's version of NAFDAC), Fred Hines, Staff Pathologist at the FDA wrote: "There is considerable disparity in the reported findings of gastric erosions or

necrosis lesions from the three studies provided by Calgene Inc. This disparity has not been adequately addressed or explained by the sponsor or the laboratory where the study was conducted'

In 1994, Dr. Joseph Cummins, Emeritus Professor of Genetics at the University of West-Ontario warned that "the inclusion in FlavrSavr tomatoes of a genetic sequence from the Cauliflower Mosaic Virus could create virulent new viruses. "

Eventually due to safety concerns and economic failure, the modified tomato was taken off the market. Mr. Monsanto, that's a WHOLE LOT of history to conveniently leave out don't you think?

Below is Monsanto's 'copy and paste' response to every negative complaint or tragedy their technology brings to people all over the world from Argentina all the way to India and South Africa.

"Roundup® brand agricultural herbicides have a long history of safe use when used according to label directions in more than 100 countries around the world. Comprehensive toxicological studies have demonstrated that glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup® branded agricultural herbicides does not cause birth defects or reproductive problems."

Safe use right? Long history right? Let's talk about the safety and long history of a product you also produced and told the world was safe for a long period of time -DDT

In 1944, Monsanto became one of the first manufacturers of t

he insecticide DDT to combat malariatransmitting mosquitoes. Despite decades of Monsanto propaganda insisting that DDT was safe, the true effects of DDT's toxicity were at last confirmed through Independent research and in 1972, DDT was banned throughout America.

Today, it is common knowledge that DDT causes cancer. But back in the 1940s, Monsanto told us it was safe.

With regards to the 300,000 farmer suicides in India, Monsanto does as a typical Brutish American corporation does, similar to the NRA (National Rifle Association) justifies gun ownership after a mass shooting in America, 'Parents buy more guns to protect yourself from your 10 year old, teachers should too' or 'Gun violence is caused by video games, music and movies'.

Somehow it would seem mass killings are caused by everything except the guns, I digress.

The real reason for farmer suicides are failed promises of Monsanto, the creation of pest resistance, expensive seeds and the need for a larger amount of water relative to natural varieties. Bt cotton was a failure, but guess what? Monsanto had been paid for their magic seeds, so while their books recorded profit, farmers were dying in debt.

According to physicist and author Vandana Shiva, Monsanto's contributions to a "suicide economy" in India, such as an increase in the price per kilogram of cotton seeds from 7 to 17,000 rupees. Shiva lists additional complications:

"Indigenous cotton varieties can be intercropped with food crops. Bt-cotton can only be grown as a monoculture. Indigenous cotton is rain fed. Bt-cotton needs irrigation. Indigenous varieties are pest resistant. Bt-cotton, even though promoted as resistant to the bollworm, has created new pests, and to control these new pests, farmers are using 13 times more pesticides then they were using prior to introduction of Bt-cotton. And finally, Monsanto sells its GMO seeds on fraudulent claims of yields of 1500/kg/year when farmers harvest 300-400 kg/year on an average."

They quoted their Imperial agent Mr. Abdallah el-Kurebe extensively but this one quote is a true gem: "That the country's subsistence agriculture can no longer supply the needs of its growing population is undoubtedly true. This is the very reason for the country's adoption of agricultural biotechnology and the biosafety law seeks to provide the framework for Nigerian scientists who have done much research to move forward from field trials into commercial testing phases for eventual deployment to farmers," Mr.Abdallah el-Kurebe a "Media Fellow" of Agricultural Biosciences.

Mr. Media Fellow, apart from interviewing people and recording what they tell you, have you done any critical research? I mean according to you "The human body would always be able to "digest" the engineered tomato that is cooked." Are you saying engineered raw tomatoes wouldn't digest in the human body? That aside back to your quote. Nigeria has not mechanized our agriculture; neither has it created a storage network to stem the fifty percent spoilage rate of farm produce that occurs between the farms to the consumer. The media fellow is advocating GMOs as the only solution for Nigeria, he speaks about research, what research have Nigerian scientist done? Was it Nigerian scientist that created the Bt strain Monsanto donated for the Bt cowpea? The answer is NO. Was the transgenic Bt Cowpea created at the IAR Zaria? NO, it was created by CSIRO in Australia. So, the scientist at (IAR) Zaria without Bio-safety laws or public discourse are carrying out field trials with technology they don't have the ability to create, test or assess the effects on the humans that will consume them.

The Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR) in Zaria in association with Monsanto and CSIRO in Australia have created Bt Cowpea using genes derived from the bacterium, Bacillus thuringiensis (which was provided by Monsanto and combined by CSIRO) and have carried out field trials (Ezezika&Dall, 2012).



It is clear from these experiments and associations that the Nigerian scientist and agencies the "media fellow" speaks about have become planters, mere surrogates for experimentation on behalf of Monsanto and similar organizations.

To round it up, Mr. Monsanto asks "Why do media organizations continue to give space to anti-GMO activists with absolutely no qualifications to rant about the alleged risks of GM seeds, which the world's leading scientific and public health authorities have deemed to be every bit as safe as conventional seeds and foods?"

Mr. Monsanto, Which scientific and public health authorities?

"Ultimately, it is the food producer who is responsible for assuring safety" — FDA, "Statement of Policy: Foods Derived from New Plant Varieties" (GMO Policy), Federal Register, Vol. 57, No. 104 (1992), p. 229

"Monsanto should not have to vouchsafe the safety of biotech food. Our interest is in selling as much of it as possible. Assuring its safety is the F.D.A.'s job" - Philip Angell, Monsanto's director of corporate communications. "Playing God in the Garden" New York Times Magazine, October 25, 1998.

Clearly, there seems to be a HUGE AMOUNT of confusion between you and the FDA, you really should sort that out.

A speech made by US Rep Dennis Kucinich on the Congress floor:

"In 1992 the Food and Drug Administration decided that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are the functional equivalent of conventional foods. They arrived at this decision without testing GMOs for allergenicity, toxicity, anti-biotic resistance and functional characteristics. As a result hundreds of millions of acres of GMO crops were planted in America without the knowledge or consent of the American people: no safety testing and no long-term health studies. The FDA has received over a million comments from citizens demanding labeling of GMOs. Ninety percent of Americans agree. So, why no labeling? I'll give you one reason: The influence and the corruption of the political process by Monsanto. Monsanto has been a prime mover in GMO technology, a multi-million dollar GMO lobby here and a major political contributor."

Mr. Monsanto clearly has no problems with a 'Media Fellow' (a journalist) publishing his own opinions nor do they have a problem quoting him extensively yet they have an issue with an Architect's opinion.

Typical, but that's expected from a company that sues farmers, bullies and sues states like Vermont because the people demand their food be labeled. All this is to be expected of a company that has a God-complex, with an aim to control our food and claim ownership of seeds with a business model that enslaves farmers.

"People will have Roundup Ready soya whether they like it or not" - Ann Foster, spokesperson for Monsanto in Britain, as quoted in The Nation magazine from article "The Politics of Food" by Maria Margaronis December 27, 1999 issue.

Is it by force?

Listen, Mr. Monsanto, you can't come to Nigeria and bully us in to neo-colonialism. Your ancestors fooled us once with umbrellas and mirrors but it won't happen with your magic seeds. I am not sure what our Minister of agriculture, Mr. Adesina is telling you or who you think we are in this country.

Nigeria will mechanize, Nigeria will develop and provide for each and every Nigerian without your enslavement and without your disease-linked technology.

You want 'qualified' commentary right, possibly from a scientist right? No problem, here you go:

"The few scientific researches done on the effects of these foods on humans have showed stunted growth, impaired immune systems, bleeding stomachs, abnormal and potentially precancerous cell growth in the intestines, impaired blood cell development, misshaped cell structures in the liver, pancreas and testicles, altered gene expression and cell metabolism, liver and kidney lesions, partially atrophied livers, inflamed kidneys, less developed organs, reduced digestive enzymes, higher blood sugar, inflamed lung tissue, increased death rates and higher offspring mortality as well.

After GM soy was introduced in the UK, allergies from the product skyrocketed by 50 percent. Repeated use of seeds like Monsanto's Roundup-Ready soybeans results in vicious new super-weeds that need far greater amounts of stronger herbicides to combat. Their toxic residues remain in crops that humans and animals then eat. Even small amounts of these toxins are endocrine disruptors that can affect

human reproduction adversely. Most recently, tests showed the presence of the herbicide glyphosate, widely used with Monsanto's herbicide-tolerant GM soybean and maize varieties, in samples of mothers' breast milk in the United States," says Aniebo.

Imagine if a Nigerian company behaved in a similar fashion to Monsanto and tried to push their dependency-inducing technology through the US Senate. That company would be labeled a threat to national security. One is amazed at the sheer volume of hypocrisy and arrogance this company exudes, but it's not their fault.

Nigerians, are you not tired? We drive in cars made by foreigners on roads built by foreigners using phones created by foreigners. Foreign companies drill our oil then they even "help" us refine our oil then sell it back to us.

Agriculture the most basic achievement of any civilization, the one thing we have that is our own would now be outsourced as well? Do you not see that while our farmers become dependent on these seeds, which they never needed in the first place, Monsanto and the likes take this revenue back to their country and guess what they do with it? They build more laboratories, pay scientists salaries, make more advancement and make their own countries greater. Is it so difficult to see that we can never be great if we keep looking for handouts, keep being more and more dependent? If we keep outsourcing our ability to think, to create, to innovate, all for short term gain. We must now decide to invest in ourselves, make our own mistakes; learn from them in a bid to create an environment for global giants to emerge in Nigeria, by Nigerians for Nigerians on our own terms. This is more than agriculture. It is more than science. It is about us as a people deciding to stand. It is about not leaving a legacy of slavery and sickness to our children and future generations 🌰



Nigerian paper sows misinformation on GM and hybrid seeds

06/06/2014

On May 19, the The Guardian, a Nigerian newspaper, published a commentary alleging that genetically modified and even hybrid seeds are carcinogenic and "deadly." The author of the commentary? A Nigerian architect with a self-professed "passion for geo-political sustainability, equity and fairness."

Let's leave aside the obvious question of whether architects, however qualified, should be considered authorities on anything other than building design. Many of the accusations in Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour's rant lack any credible substantiation, or are just downright bizarre. For example, his claim that biotech tomatoes (which don't exist, btw) can become toxic and cause cancer. Of course! Just what every seed company wants to sell! Or his rhetorical question of whether the "250,000 Bt cotton farmer suicides in India" (See Monsanto Myth#3) are sustainable.

Another Nigerian newspaper, Newsdiary online, published a response by Abdallah el-Kurebe, an award-winning Media Fellow of Biosciences for Farming in Africa and President of African Journalists Network for Agriculture, that addresses several of the most pernicious myths found in Rhodes-Vivour's commentary. Moreover, his response mentions the food security context in Nigeria and some of the benefits associated with GMOs, which the earlier commentary conveniently neglected to mention.

"Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation (167 million) and a food deficit country is not debatable," wrote el-Kurebe. "That the country's subsistence agriculture can no longer supply the needs of its growing population is undoubtedly true. This is the very reason for the country's adoption of agricultural biotechnology and the biosafety law seeks to provide the framework for Nigerian scientists who have done much research to move forward from field trials into commercial testing phases for eventual deployment to farmers," he wrote.

Newspapers do not feel compelled to print commentaries by people who claim the earth is flat, or that the sun revolves around the earth, or that vaccines cause autism. That would be irresponsible and in each case factually incorrect. Why, then, do media organizations continue to give space to anti-GM activists with absolutely no qualifications to rant about the alleged risks of GM seeds, which the world's leading scientific and public health authorities have deemed to be every bit as safe as conventional seeds and foods? �

Culled from http://monsantoblog.eu/nigerian-paper-sows-misinformation-on-gm-and-hybrid-seeds/

HOMEF in Networks

Oilwatch Africa/International

HOMEF is founding member of the **No REDD in Africa Network (NRAN)** formed in March 2013 at the World Social Forum at Tunis

Yes to Life – No to Mining Network (YLMN) – HOMEF is a member of this anti-mining network that came to being under an ancient baobab tree at Tharaka, Kenya in April 2013 at an African Biodiversity Network meeting

Alternatives International

REASONS VITE GIVEN CONTRACTOR OF THE WORLD

by Mark Anslow (published in The Ecologist March 1, 2008)

Genetic modification can't deliver a safe, secure future food supply. Here's why...

1. Failure to deliver

Despite the hype, genetic modification consistently fails to live up to industry claims. Only two GM traits have ever made it to market: herbicide resistance and BT toxin expression (see below). Other promises of genetic modification have failed to materialise. The much vaunted GM 'golden rice' - hailed as a cure to vitamin A deficiency - has never made it out of the laboratory, partly because in order to meet recommended levels of vitamin A intake, consumers would need to eat 12 bowls of the rice every day.(1) In 2004, the Kenyan government admitted that Monsanto's GM sweet potatoes were no more resistant to feathery mottle virus than ordinary strains, and in fact produced lower yields.(2) And in January 2008, news that scientists had modified a carrot to cure osteoporosis by providing calcium had to be weighed against the fact that you would need to eat 1.6 kilograms of these vegetables each day to meet your recommended calcium intake.(3)

2. Costing the Earth

GM crops are costing farmers and governments more money than they are making. In 2003, a report by the Soil Association estimated the cost to the US economy of GM crops at around \$12 billion (£6 billion) since 1999, on account of inflated farm subsidies, loss of export orders and

various seed recalls.(4) A study in Iowa found that GM soyabeans required all the same costs as conventional farming but, because they produced lower yields (see below), the farmers ended up making no profit at all.(5) In India, an independent study found that BT cotton crops were costing farmers 10 per cent more than non-BT variants and bringing in 40 per cent lower profits.(6) Between 2001 and 2005, more than 32,000 Indian farmers committed suicide, most as a result of mounting debts caused by inadequate crops.(7)

3. Contamination and gene escape

No matter how hard you try, you can never be sure that what you are eating is GM-free. In a recent article, the New Scientist admitted that contamination and cross-fertilisation between GM and non-GM crops 'has happened on many occasions already'.(8) In late 2007, US company Scotts Miracle-Gro was fined \$500,000 by the US Department of Agriculture when genetic material from a new golf-course grass Scotts had been testing was found in native grasses as far as 13 miles away from the test sites, apparently released when freshly cut grass was caught and blown by the wind.(9) In 2006, an analysis of 40 Spanish conventional and organic farms found that eight were contaminated with GM corn varieties, including one farmer whose crop contained 12.6 per cent GM plants.

4. Reliance on pesticides

Far from reducing dependency on pesticides and fertilisers, GM crops frequently increase farmers' reliance on these products. Herbicideresistant crops can be sprayed indiscriminately with weedkillers such as Monsanto's 'Roundup' because they are engineered to withstand the effect of the chemical. This means that significantly higher levels of herbicide are found in the final food product, however, and often a second herbicide is used in the late stages of the crop to promote 'dessication' or drying, meaning these crops receive a double dose of harmful chemicals.(10) BT maize, engineered to produce an insecticidal toxin, has never eliminated the use of pesticides,(11) and because the BT gene cannot be 'switched off' the crops continue to produce the toxin right up until harvest, reaching the consumer at its highest possible concentrations. (12)

5. 'Frankenfoods'

Despite the best efforts of the biotech industry, consumers remain staunchly opposed to GM food. In 2007, the vast majority of 11,700 responses to the Government's consultation on whether contamination of organic food with traces of GM crops should be allowed were strongly negative. The Government's own 'GM Nation' debate in 2003 discovered that half of its participants 'never want to see GM crops grown in the United

Kingdom under any circumstances', and 96 per cent thought that society knew too little about the health impacts of genetic modification. In India, farmers' experience of BT cotton has been so disastrous that the Maharashtra government now advises that farmers grow soybeans instead. And in Australia, over 250 food companies lodged appeals with the state governments of New South Wales and Victoria over the lifting of bans against growing GM

canola crops.(13)

6. Breeding resistance

Nature is smart, and there are already reports of species resistant to GM crops emerging. This is seen in the emergence of new 'superweeds' on farms in North America – plants that have evolved the ability to withstand the industry's chemicals. A report by then UK conservation body English Nature (now Natural England), in 2002, revealed that oilseed rape plants that had developed resistance to three or more herbicides were 'not uncommon' in Canada.(14) The superweeds had been created through random crosses between neighbouring GM crops. In order to tackle these superweeds, Canadian farmers were forced to resort to even stronger, more toxic herbicides.(15) Similarly, pests (notably the diamondback moth) have been quick to develop resistance to BT toxin, and in 2007 swarms of mealy bugs began attacking supposedly pest-resistant Indian cotton.

7. Creating problems for solutions

Many of the so-called 'problems' for which the biotechnology industry develops 'solutions' seem to be notions of PR rather than science. Herbicide-resistance was sold under the claim that because crops could be doused in chemicals, there would be much less need to weed mechanically or plough the soil, keeping more carbon and nitrates under the surface. But a new long-term study by the US Agricultural Research Service has shown that organic farming, even with ploughing, stores more carbon than the GM crops save. (16) BT cotton was claimed to increase resistance to pests, but farmers in East Africa discovered that by planting a local weed amid their corn crop, they could lure pests to lay their eggs on the weed and not the crop.(17)

8. Health risks

The results of tests on animals exposed to GM crops give serious cause for concern over their safety. In 1998, Scottish scientists found damage to every single internal organ in rats fed blightresistant GM potatoes. In a 2006 experiment, female rats fed on herbicideresistant soybeans gave birth to severely stunted pups, of which half died within three weeks. The survivors were sterile. In the same year, Indian news agencies reported that thousands of sheep allowed to graze on BT cotton crop residues had died suddenly. Further cases of livestock deaths followed in 2007. There have also been reports of allergy-like symptoms among Indian labourers in BT cotton fields. In 2002, the only trial ever to involve human beings appeared to show that altered genetic material from GM soybeans not only survives in the human gut, but may even pass its genetic material to bacteria within the digestive system.(18)

9. Left hungry

GM crops have always come with promises of increased yields for farmers, but this has rarely been the case. A three-year study of 87 villages in India found that non-BT cotton consistently produced 30 per cent higher yields than the (more expensive) GM alternative.(19) It is now widely accepted that GM soybeans produce consistently lower yields than conventional varieties. In 1992, Monsanto's own trials showed that the company's Roundup Ready soybeans

yield 11.5 per cent less on harvest. Later Monsanto studies went on to reveal that some trials of GM canola crops in Australia actually produced yields 16 per cent below the non- GM national average. (20)

10. Wedded to fertilisers and fossil fuels

No genetically modified crop has yet eliminated the need for chemical fertilisers in order to achieve expected yields. Although the industry has made much of the possibility of splicing nitrogen-fixing genes into commercial food crops in order to boost yields, there has so far been little success. This means that GM crops are just as dependent on fossil fuels to make fertilisers as conventional agriculture. In addition to this, GM traits are often specifically designed to fit with large-scale industrial agriculture. Herbicide resistance is of no real benefit unless your farm is too vast to weed mechanically, and it presumes that the farmers already farm in a way that involves the chemical spraying of their crops. Similarly, BT toxin expression is designed to counteract the problem of pest control in vast monocultures, which encourage infestations. In a world that will soon have to change its view of farming – facing as it does the twin challenges of climate change and peak oil – GM crops will soon come to look like a relic of bygone practices.

Mark Anslow is the Ecologist's senior reporter



THE SPAR(

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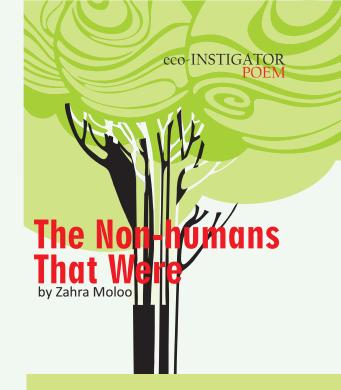
(www.thesparc.net) writes:

This week sees the publication of the most comprehensive analysis to date of the nutritional composition of organic versus non-organic foods, and the accompanying levels of pesticide contamination. Published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* by UK scientists (Barański et al., 2014), the meta-analysis involved 343 peer-reviewed studies and found increased antioxidant levels in organic produce, many of which have been linked to reduced risk of chronic diseases. Pesticide levels were four times higher in non-organic produce and toxic metal levels were also significantly higher in non-organic foods.

The EU is set to increase the daily acceptable intake by 67%, going against the independent science showing multiple pathways by which glyphosate causes serious harm to human health. The re-assessment, submitted to the European Safety Authority in January is fatally flawed by conflict of interest (Swanson and Ho, 2014). See Swanson (2014) for details on toxicology.

The US is on the verge of approving a new type of genetically modified crop, tolerant to the herbicide 2,4-D (as well as glyphosate). 2,4-D has already been associated with many illnesses including cancers, as summarised by Cummins (2012). A report by Centre for Food Safety has also summarised the issues surrounding this technology in Going Backwards: Dow's 2,4-D-Resistant Crops and a More Toxic Future Exposure to 2,4-D.

Read Cummin's 2012 summary at http://www.i-sis.org.uk/New_GM_Crops_Tolerant_To_Old_Toxic_Herbic ides.phphereunder:



Once upon an era, water wound its way across hillsides and between chattering forests, it's course unfettered by the charred remains of human dumpsites. Once, trees conversed in their dialects. Standing beside each other, extending into the centuries, they spoke together and decided how they would grow. Water decided. Trees decided. Whole forests, and mountains, and wolves and whales and monkeys, birds, insects, and the smallest varied beings in the soil and in the grass decided how they would live. Where they would go.

Can we not, for one week, for two days, walk about the earth and find it quietly living again. Find it contented and vibrant. Or better yet, find that we ourselves have vanished. That our bodies are not longer tangible. That now, only our ghosts wander deliriously around empty windows, peeking out from the gaping holes of abandoned buildings. And the trees will say, 'once there were humans.'

Zahra is a Journalist and Filmmaker.

HOME FSUSTAINABILITY ACADEMY



Hs04: Seeds of Freedom -

Our HS04 will be special sessions aimed at primary School pupils, high school students and farmers. It will take a critical look at the challenge posed to African agriculture by the unrelenting push of the biotech industry to introduce genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa. The sessions will hold in Benin City in November 2014. Other locations will be announced.

Special Announcement

Eco-Instigator #05 will focus on "Re-Source Democracy".

It will include articles on Earth Law, Rights of Mother Earth, etc.
You are welcome to send articles, poems and thoughts on this subject.

HOMEF's Community Dialogue -

A new initiative by HOMEF to take the debate to the grassroots. Watch out for the calendar of dialogues.

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You can always catch up on all the juice of what's going on with us. It's free and full of insightful information on hunger, oil politics and environmental justice all around the world. Also, you can find out about all our workshops and programs first from our e-bulletin.

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