



Press release / GMO
Bucharest – October 21st 2009

Percy Schmeiser warns Romania about GMO contamination ***Illegal Orders of the Ministry of Agriculture could block export of agriculture products***

Today, at a press conference held in Bucharest, Percy Schmeiser warns the Romanian public about the threats that GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms) represent for environment, agriculture, farmers and consumers. Percy is the Canadian farmer awarded with the Alternative Nobel Prize for the struggle against the American giant corporation Monsanto which contaminated his canola fields with their patented genetically modified varieties [1]. The legal conflict lasted for more than 10 years. All this time the Schmeiser family was losing harvests, money, time and was continuously threatened and harassed. Recently, Percy has won a lawsuit against Monsanto, a victory that gave the farmers a long expected precedent, since this kind of situations have already appeared all over the world. *"I was growing local varieties of canola, improved through on-farm selection by my family. One day, Monsanto's agents rang at my door telling me that they found their patented genes in my canola and they will seize my harvest. In addition, they also asked for 20,000 euros for infringement of their intellectual property rights. The debate with Monsanto actually raises more severe issues beside the contamination of my canola with GMOs. It was proven that the farmers are completely unprotected in front of greedy corporations. It does not really matter how the GM seed got into a farmer's field. As long as a company owns a patent on that seed variety they will claim it without any remorse, for an even higher profit. But is it natural for a company that holds monopol on seeds to have the right over life? Can anyone still protect the farmers' right to have conventional or organic crops? Can farmers still have their ancient right to save their own seeds and develop them if they want to? Monsanto has their claws on Romania, too. So, these are questions that every farmer has to ask themselves before it's too late."*, stated Percy Schmeiser, winner of the Alternative Nobel Prize for the struggle against Monsanto.

In Romania, the GMO contamination starts at the Ministry of Agriculture (MAFRD). Even if there are 3.8 million small family farms in Romania, MAFRD acts mostly as a ministry of the few agri-business multinationals. Ignoring the rights of farmers and consumers to have products without GMOs, this year the Minister has issued the Orders 185 and 186 which allow the contamination of seeds with GMOs, both approved and not approved for cultivation or human consumption in the EU. These Orders are illegal because they breach the European Directive 2001/18/EC, the Law 247/2009 and the clear recommendations of the European Commission who asked Romania to wait for an agreement of the member states on this issue. Order no. 185/2009 has already been invoked by Agrobiotechrom Association [2] in the case of GMO contaminated soybeans discovered last month by Agent Green in Calarasi County [3]. Agrobiotechrom is an association founded by the agri-business industry (Monsanto, Pioneer and Syngenta) that promotes the use of GMOs in agriculture.

"Last month we filed a lawsuit against the Ministry of Agriculture for their refusal to reveal the locations of GMO fields. Today, we sue the ministry once again, together with the GRINDA Group, for the illegal Orders and this time we also ask the European Commission to take Romania to the European Court of Justice.", added Gabriel Păun, President of Agent Green.

"There is a principle of «zero tolerance» for contamination of seeds with approved GMOs and for any type of contamination with unapproved GMOs in the EU. The exports of Romanian agriculture products could be blocked by the European Commission if the Orders issued by the Minister of Agriculture are not immediately redrawn. The Minister should stop doing business favours for the multinationals. Their duty is to protect Romanian farmers from GMO contamination and to promote Romanian rural values.", concluded Dan Craioveanu, Coordinator of GRINDA Group.



Agent Green and GRINDA demands:

- **the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development of Romania to immediately withdraw Orders no. 185 and 186 of 2009 in order to respect the rights of farmers and consumers that don't want GMOs, to protect the environment and to avoid restrictions on exports**
- **the European Commission to impose sanctions against the Ministry of Agriculture**
- **the Ministry of Administration and Interior to investigate the illegal actions of the Ministry of Agriculture, including the potential direct or indirect involvement of Monsanto or other companies that produce GMOs**

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NOTE:

[1] More information about the debate Schmeiser vs. Monsanto:
<http://www.agentgreen.ro/new/index.php?id=156>

[2] Agrobiotechrom press release 22.09.2009:
<http://www.agrobiotechrom.ro/media.html#>

[3] Agent Green press release 21.09.2009
<http://www.agentgreen.ro/new/index.php?id=147>