

## Combating Hunger through Biodiversity – The Seed Caravan in Switzerland – 25 May – 4 June 2010

### Final Declaration

#### **Without Seeds, there is No Life. Without Biodiversity there is No Future.**

Seeds are fundamental to nutrition and therefore to life in general. Any one in possession of seeds or with control over them, holds the key to food security and thereby the survival of mankind.

For centuries, farmers have been storing, developing and breeding seeds. In doing so, they have developed approximately 10,000 different crops, each with a large number of varieties. In Europe, this has been done mainly by growers over the last hundred years. However, this diversity is endangered with 90 per cent of crop varieties having already disappeared from our fields. Globally, only 15 different plant species and 8 different animal species provide the basis for our nutrition. Diversification within these few species has also been reduced considerably. The main reason for this dramatic loss in diversity is the increase in agricultural industrialisation, which is based on energy, water and chemical-intensive monocultures. The latest development in this environmentally destructive farming is genetically modified, patented crops. Genetic engineering in agriculture leads ultimately to *genetic* monocultures. The same gene is introduced into different plant species and then grown all over the world. Associated with these monocultures is an increase in the monopolisation of seeds.

#### **Monopolisation of the International Seed Market: Dangerous Dependencies and Reduced Diversity**

Worldwide, two thirds of all seeds are traded commercially, i.e. sold by seed companies. Only one third of the harvest is either kept by the farmers or traded among them. This is especially the case in developing countries.

- ⇒ 25 years ago, over 7,000 commercially active plant breeding companies were registered. None of these companies controlled more than 1 per cent of the international market.
- ⇒ Today, 67 per cent of the international seed market is controlled by a mere 10 multinational seed companies. The four largest corporations (Monsanto, Syngenta, DuPont, Limagrain) alone control over 50 per cent of the market.

Such monopolisation is dangerous. The handful of multinational corporations controlling the market, not only determine which plants are bred and marketed, but they also control the price at which they are sold. The use of genetic engineering in the breeding of plants has also led to the introduction of seed patents. Now even plants and animals farmed in a conventional manner are being patented. The commercial power of multinationals has direct implications for farmers, as a report published in April 2009<sup>1</sup> shows: In the United States, for example, seed prices have increased by 146 per cent over the past ten years, with a 64 per cent increase over the last three years alone. Over 80 per cent of the soybean and cotton harvest and 70 per cent of the maize harvest contain at least one gene patented by Monsanto. Over the past three years, all conventionally bred cotton seed in India has been produced using genetic engineering. 95 per cent of Indian cotton is genetically modified. These genetically modified seeds are up to 300 per cent more expensive than conventional cotton.

<sup>1</sup> Then, C. and Tippe, R.: The future of seeds and food, April 2009



In addition, monopolisation leads to a reduction in the diversity of species and varieties in agriculture. Multinational corporations breed universal species, which can be marketed globally. These species are bred mainly for cultivation in large-scale monocultures. The most important and often only criterion for such species is the yield. Other qualities, such as adaptability to specific climatic conditions, are neglected. These universal, high-yield crops can only be cultivated successfully however, if in addition to using sufficient amounts of chemical fertiliser, water and pesticide, the environmental conditions are adapted to those of the lab situation.

At the same time, however, biodiversity can only be achieved when seeds are bred in the field, in a decentralised, sustainable and locally adapted manner. Some medium-sized companies which breed seeds in a conventional manner are increasingly opting for organic methods in order to increase the resistance of particular varieties. In this way, species are bred which are optimally adapted to local climate and soil conditions, and they are continuously improved as conditions change. Given changes in climate, this method of breeding is more important than ever. Agricultural diversity is therefore key to food sovereignty and fighting hunger.

#### **Seed Breeding and Crop Diversity in Switzerland**

Multinational corporations do not play a dominant role in the seed market in Switzerland (yet). No concrete figures are available regarding the distribution of the Swiss seed market. The Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture has established the percentage of primary seeds bred in Switzerland for the following crops (level of seed self-sufficiency):

- ⇒ 90 % of breadstuffs and feed grain (maize not included)
- ⇒ 30 % of maize
- ⇒ 0 % of potatoes (imported primary seed can be multiplied in Switzerland for up to three generations)
- ⇒ 0 % of sugar beet
- ⇒ 0 % of rape
- ⇒ 0 % forage production

Some examples of how little crop diversity is made us of in Switzerland:

Out of the 97 potato varieties registered in Switzerland, only seven are commercially cultivated. In the case of apples, the ratio is even worse: Only eight out of 1174 varieties play a major role in commercial fruit growing. For pears, only four out of the 911 registered varieties are cultivated.

In 2008, Switzerland signed the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV 91). This version of the convention strengthens the rights of breeders, to the disadvantage of farmers.

- ⇒ Since then, the cloning of 80 per cent of cultivated plants is forbidden in Switzerland (e.g. vegetables, berries and fruit). The validity period for this variety protection and therefore the ban on cloning protected varieties was extended from 20 to 25 years.



### **Diversity as a Strategy to Reduce and Adapt to Climate Change**

Agriculture is responsible for approximately 30 per cent of greenhouse emissions. These emissions are mainly due to the high consumption of fossil energy by fertilisers and agricultural machinery, as well as the clearing of tropical forests and the transport of goods. According to the World Agriculture Report (IAASTD), energy-intense monocultures and industrial meat production exacerbate global warming. At the same time, climatic changes strongly affect agriculture and therefore seriously threaten future food security globally.

Biological diversity in agriculture is a central strategy for adapting to these changes. A large diversity of species and varieties decreases the likelihood that the entire harvest is destroyed by extreme weather events and delayed rainy seasons. Agrobiodiversity can be seen as an affordable and self-determined insurance policy for small farmers. Instead of promoting single varieties of a few main crops with a focus on short-term success, we need sustainable adaptation strategies, which reduce the vulnerability of people in developing countries. A sustainable and diversified agriculture can cushion the impact of climate change.

### **The International Seed Caravan Calls upon Switzerland to:**

Implement an agricultural policy promoting a sustainable Swiss agriculture, capable of providing the population with diverse, regional, healthy, GM-free and organically produced food even in the face of climate change. Any political measures must be aimed at ensuring the long-term survival of Swiss farms. This may not however be done at the expense of people – including small farmers – or the environment, in other countries.

#### **Such an agricultural policy must in particular include the promotion and financial support of...**

- ... sustainable, seed breeding adapted to the different regions of Switzerland
- ... a GM-free seed production, which is also protected in the long term from potential contamination by genetically modified organisms.
- ... breeding programmes for heirloom varieties
- ... the maintenance, development, propagation and exploitation of crop diversity in Switzerland
- ... a diverse and organic agriculture, which has a positive influence on biodiversity in Switzerland and significantly reduces the use of energy and chemicals.

#### **In terms of Swiss climate policy, this means...**

- ... the recognition and promotion of agrobiodiversity and a diverse, rural and organic agriculture as a strategy to diminish climate change adapt to changing climate conditions.

#### **In terms of Swiss trade policy, this means...**

- ... that no measures are taken which might lead to price dumping through exports or imports, as this would destroy local markets and thereby the possibility of producing and marketing local varieties and species.

#### **In terms of Swiss development policy, this means...**

- ... the promotion and financial support of decentralised, sustainable and locally adapted breeding in the field .
- ... supporting breeding programmes which involve farmers and their specific knowledge right from the beginning.



- ... the promotion of education and further training in the area of seed breeding and multiplication .
- ... the promotion of the preservation, further development and use of local biodiversity, in particular through local and regional marketing programmes.
- ... ensuring that farmers' rights with regard to seeds and local biodiversity are respected during international negotiations, and that the introduction of strict intellectual property rights, in particular plant and animal patents, are prevented.

In addition, we demand a comprehensive ban on patents for plants and animals, as well as for their characteristics and genes.

**The consumption of locally grown, diverse, healthy, seasonal, organically produced and fairly traded products not only benefits farmers around the world, but is also in the interest of biodiversity!**

**Bio Suisse  
IP-Suisse  
Swiss Farmers Union (SBV)  
SWISSAID**

**GenAu Rheinau  
IG Emmer& Einkorn  
ProSpecieRara  
Sativa  
Schweizerische Arbeitsgruppe Gentechnologie SAG  
Verein für Alpine Kulturpflanzen**

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### **Final Declaration of the Participants of the International Seeds Caravan through Switzerland 2010**

#### ***With local seed diversity against hunger and climate change***

We, as organizations engaged with small producers, rural and indigenous communities across the world, believe that the concept of food sovereignty should be the principal framework for addressing food and agriculture particularly to combat hunger and mitigate climate change.

In our understanding food sovereignty is an inalienable right of peoples, communities and countries to define, decide and implement their own agricultural, food and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances.

Towards this, we set ourselves to build alliances with farmers and their organizations as well as with like-minded public and civil society organizations to strive for diverse, ecologically safe, regional or local and fair production and consumption of food.



In achieving this we engage ourselves to...

- ... promote local production, processing, marketing and consumption of food
- ... promote agricultural practices which conserve and use biodiversity
- ... promote and support ecological and locally adopted seed breeding
- ... fight against patenting of life
- ... build farmers institutions which helps them to organize knowledge generation and sharing regarding seeds using traditional knowledge
- ... generate awareness on risks of high external input dependent green revolution model of agriculture and genetic engineering
- ... look out and build alliances with like minded scientific institutions and researchers, promoting sustainable agriculture and local seed diversity
- ... strive for supportive policy change for sustaining farming and farming based livelihoods...

...hence, we demand from our local and national governments that...

- ... no patents on seeds, plants, farm animals and other living forms and part thereof should be allowed
- ... stop corporate control over seeds and promote and support decentralized ecological seeds production and breeding
- ... stop globalization and liberalization of agricultural trade which negatively impacts local communities and biodiversity
- ... promote and support ecologically safe food production and those who promote and conserve local diversity
- ... approval and implementation of laws and policies that enhance conservation and the use of biodiversity including local seed diversity and marginalized species
- ... no environmental release of genetically modified organisms in agriculture and livestock be allowed
- ... they involve farmers organizations in decision making on agriculture and related policies
- ... they guarantee independent and public financed research based on transparent processes including on farm participatory breeding
- ... they acknowledge use of agriculture biodiversity as a strategy for mitigation and adaptation to climate change
- ... production resources as land, water and seeds should be in the hand of the farmers
- ... they stop all sorts of land grabbing, land use shift from agriculture to non agricultural use and from food to non food crops, such as agrofuels

**Participants of the International Seeds Caravan through Switzerland**

May 25<sup>th</sup> – June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010

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Landquart, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010

