KISAN KI AWAAZ

(National Magazine of Farmers' Voice)



Dr. Krishan Bir Chaudhary inaugurating National Convention of Bharatiya Krishak Samaj in Nashik (MHR) on 10-11 Dec. 2011,



Happy New Year - 2012

www.kisankiawaaz.org Vol.3 No.1. January, 2012



Dr. Krishan Bir Chaudhary

Global Civil Society Opposition to the "Pledge Against Protectionism" in WTO

A wide variety of civil society experts from the global present in Geneva for the 8th Ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO), voiced their opposition to the idea of a standstill on tariffs in the WTO proposed within the "Pledge Against Protectionism" . The present policies are unfair and unbalanced which favors trade concentration in the hands of few trans-nationals corporations for exports and are based on the growing and irrational exploitation of human and natural resources from the developing countries, and the developing countries are facing negative impact of trade that deepen poverty & inequality.

We condemn the double standards of countries that proposed an additional pledge against protectionism. While, the developed countries resorted to heavily protecting their agri-business corporations, it is travesty of justice to call upon the developing countries and LDCs to remove the minimum support structures created to safeguard the livelihoods of millions of small and marginal farmers. Without the removal of Green Box subsidies (a great protection given to agri-business corporations by the developed countries), the developed country demands in this pledge that developing countries and least developed countries should not be able to exercise their rights under the WTO to raise their applied tariffs to their bound rate is unfair. Agricultural liberalization in India has already caused 256000 Indian farmers to commit suicide. We call on India not to sign this pledge or agree to any standstill at the WTO.

There is nothing new from what these developed countries are saying about protectionism. They have to deal with their domestic protectionist tendencies first before they ask for multilateral cooperation. These are double standards at their worst. The developed countries' pledge to fight protectionism has no shame at all. They have no moral ground to talk against protectionism when they are the worst culprits. This is a desperate attempt to cover up the truth that the rotten and bankrupt "development" paradigm of so-called "free market" globalization is the main cause of the global economic and financial crisis.

While developing countries have been facing the challenges arising from a global economic crisis they did not cause, the "pledge" that is being promoted under the name of fighting against protectionism will bring in restrictions on using multiple policy tools that these countries have fought throughout the WTO negotiations to save, which are a right that WTO law should protect and not jeopardize, and which are essential to any development prospects in these countries. The global trade framework must provide countries sufficient policy space to pursue a positive agenda for development and job-creation, and that trade rules must facilitate, rather than hinder, global efforts to ensure true food security, sustainable development, access to affordable healthcare and medicines, and global financial stability.

Krishan Bir Chaudhary

Vol. 3 No. 1 January, 2012

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National Magazine of Farmers' Voice

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Printed & Published by :

Dr. Krishan Bir Chaudhary on behalf of Bharatiya Krishak Samaj.

Printed at Everest Press, E-49/8, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-II, New Delhi-20.

Published at :

F-1/A, Pandav Nagar, Delhi-110091
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Single copy Rs. 25/-, Annual Rs. 300/-

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F-1/A, Pandav Nagar, Delhi-110091.

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Suggestions for improvement are invited

Carbon trade is opium trade: Durban deal promotes status quo

*** Gopal Krishna**

The 17th session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) failed to acknowledge that carbon markets are encouraging a reliance on fossil fuels and a monetisation of the atmosphere.

As a consequence, small island states, coastal people, indigenous people, local communities, fisherfolk will suffer without any legal remedy.

Lack of wisdom and sense of history of free trade among those who gathered made them connive at the carbon trade even in the second commitment period. This is akin to the opium trade.

Not surprisingly, Durban revealed the failure in stabilising greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere that is required at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system, which includes the totality of the atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere and geosphere and their interactions.

Sadly, it is sought to be done through carbon offsets and carbon trade which was incorporated in the 1997 Kyoto Protocol - an amendment to the 1992 UNFCCC - on the insistence of the US which wanted to sell it to the US Senate as "economically effective", but to no avail.

The American lifestyle was not negotiable and is still not so.

Like previous sessions of the UNFCCC, which had the mandate to achieve a reduced pollution level within a timeframe sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner, the Durban exercise also remained caught in the narratives of nation states.

For instance, it is insincere on the part of developing countries like India to argue that carbon trade leads to poverty alleviation in the same breath as it seeks permits for survival emissions and Nano cars.

As long as carbon offsets and carbon trade remain part of the text of the climate treaty no amount of verbiage can disguise the fact that it is not good for the developing countries which are imitating the industrialized countries.

Some 130 species of birds have become extinct since the 17th century because of alterations in climate, landscape and their food sources. Collapse of bee hives is quite widespread.

Agricultural production depends on them but this does not seem to matter to companies and visionless nation states especially from the industrialised countries; it is the people in developing countries who will suffer the most.

The continued failure of developing countries in getting rid of false solutions from the negotiations due to their incestuous relationship with carbon credit-earning companies will lead to resource conflicts.

This is akin to pushing the client states towards agreeing to discuss climate crisis in the UN Security Council, which has already been attempted on two occasions.

Developing countries must revise their strategy by the next major UNFCCC Conference during November-December 2012 before it is too late for course correction.

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Skoda, Audi to gain most from EU deal

*** Sidhartha & Pankaj Doval**

Delhi: 23 Dec. 2011 (TNN)- Skoda and Audi are expected to be the biggest beneficiaries of the government's move to allow the import of a specified number of cars at lower import duty under the proposed bilateral trade agreement with the European Union.

Government officials told that negotiators led by commerce secretary Rahul Khullar will negotiate the concessional duty at which cars will be allowed under what is know as tariff rate quota (TRQs) inthe trading community.

Based on import data for the last financial year, buyers may end up buying Skoda Octavia, Superb and Laura made in Europe and shipped into the country if the tariff concessions materialize.

In terms of the models that benefit, Audi A4 and A6 (2,383 cars were imported in 2010-11), Audi Q7and A8 (766 cars) and BMW 7-series (556 cars) are likely to see the maximum tariff reduction.

Apart from making a major concession in allowing cheaper imports, the government seems to be going the extra mile to clinch the deal with EU.

While the tariff for import of automobiles is 100%, the notified rate, which is applied on new cars, is 60%. Sources said that negotiators are using 60% as the starting point for negotiations.

"If you start from this level, you are bound to agree for 20-30% tariff," said a source.

The auto industry fears that cheaper imports will impact the development of local manufacturing and jobs domestically although the proposal has been approved by the Trade and Economic Relations Council headed by the prime minister.

"We will be left with manufacturing small cars only, while the technologically superior vehicles would be imported. Even the auto ancillaries will be left to do basic tasks," said an industry source.

According to data available with SIAM, the industry lobby group, over 10,000 completely built units (CBUs) were imported into the country last year, with a majority coming from Europe.

These vehicles attract 60% import duty. In contrast, around 21,000 kits were imported in what is known as completely knocked down (CKD) state, which now face 10% customs duty if engine and transmission systems are assembled in India.

The fear is that lower tariffs will prompt major car makers to import CBUs instead of assembling it here.

An official said the number of vehicles that India agrees to allow under TRQs is critical.

"Obviously, EU is not going to agree for a TRQ of 12,000 or 15,000. It is going to ensure that even the CKD number is included," said the industry source.

Although the concession is expected to be offered to large vehicles, the industry fears that similar demands will come from France and Italy, which are large manufacturing bases for small cars.

In any case, after EU, similar concessions would be offered to South Korea and Japan, which had sought cheaper import of automobiles under free trade agreements signed earlier.

At the moment, the government says the facility is not going to be extended to the two Asian countries.



The Prince of Wales Says "Organic Can Feed the World”

At a conference on the future of food, a British royal defended organic farming and called on businessmen and politicians to reject biotechnology. Buy organic food whenever you can; to save money, buy in bulk, buy what's in season, and shop at local farmer's markets.

* Emily Main

RODALE NEWS, EMMAUS, PA-There aren't many times you'll find a farmworker advocate, a poet, an organic-farming senator, and British royalty all in the same room. But if you happened to attend (or watch streaming video of) the Washington Post's Future of Food Conference yesterday, that's exactly what you would have seen.



Prince Charles cited research showing that organic agriculture can feed the world. Photo: Phil Humnicky, Georgetown University.

A variety of food activists, ranging from author Eric Schlosser (Fast Food Nation) and poet /environmentalist Wendell Berry to the cofounder of the Coalition of Immokallee Workers, an advocacy group that protects the rights of migrant farmers, and His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, convened to talk about the long-term survival of the world's food supply and how our current industrial food system is poisoning our children, destroying the planet, and threatening the world's most vulnerable citizens.

"We're venturing into extremely dangerous territory by speaking of the future of food," Prince Charles said in his keynote address. "Questioning the conventional world view is risky business.”

THE DETAILS: Prince Charles' interest in organic farming dates back over 30 years, he said, to when he first realized that he needed to put his interest in healthy, sustainable food to some sort of action. In the 1980s, he decided to convert the Duchy Home Farm on one of the royal estates, Highgrove, to an organic agricultural system.

After a few years, the farm became productive enough to support a commercial food business he named Duchy Originals, and it now includes more than 200 organic meat, dairy, and packaged food products sold throughout the United Kingdom. The Prince has been a champion of sustainable food production ever since.

"We have to maintain a supply of healthy food when there is mounting pressure on every element affecting the farming process," he told the crowd. "Soils are being depleted, demand for water is growing even more voracious, and our entire system is at the mercy of the increasingly fluctuating price of oil." According to one statistic he cited, the average person on a Western-style diet consumes a gallon of diesel every day through food, due to our current system's heavy dependence on fossil fuel–dependent fertilizers, pesticides, and machinery.

In addition, world hunger and world food insecurity, which plague roughly 2 billion people, are made worse by the fact that industrial food systems being pushed upon farmers in developing countries have led to crop yields that, for the first time in history, are lower than the rate of population growth, he said.

WHAT IT MEANS: Organic farming will have to become the default means of feeding the world, he said. As economists, scientists, and farmers worldwide have been discovering, the Prince of Wales concurred that truly sustainable food systems based upon organic agricultural methods aren't just required to feed the world, but they're also required to maintain "economic biodiversity."

"Imagine a global food shortage," he said. "If it becomes harder to import food in today's quantities, where do countries turn to for staple foods? If those foods are produced locally, such economic shocks to the system wouldn't create such a panic.“ He also used the example of bluefin tuna fisheries. If sustainably managed, he said, fishermen would reap profits of $500 million per year, as opposed to the $70 million per year they're currently making. "And that's after $120 million in subsidies," he added.

Noting that excessive agricultural subsidies are to blame for our lopsided systems, he added that when those are removed and businesses pay for the true costs of their food production methods-whether it be air pollution from factory farms, water pollution from pesticides, health problems associated with cheap junk foods-poverty in the developing world would be substantially reduced. At that point, he said, it would be industrial food suppliers, not underfunded municipalities, paying to prevent water contamination, and food manufacturers, not individuals, paying for healthier foods that prevent obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and all the other expensive chronic diseases associated with bad food.

“I have been told ceaselessly that sustainable or organic farming cannot feed the world," he added. "And I find this claim very hard to understand." He cited a 2008 report from the United Nations that compiled research from more than 400 scientists worldwide that concluded that small family farms were the most productive food systems in the world." And yet, for some strange reason, the conclusions of this exhaustive report seem to have vanished without trace.”

"Capitalism ultimately depends on capital, but our capital depends on nature's capital," he concluded. "The two are in fact inseparable.”

"The Prince did an excellent job of tying all the major issues together in a neat bow that he wrapped around a package laid squarely on the doorstep of government subsidies," said Maria Rodale, chairman and CEO of Rodale Inc. and board member of the Rodale Institute (which researches organic farming), of the Prince's remarks. "Global government subsidies must stop making toxic, polluting, and nutritionally inferior foods cheaper than real food.”

Here are a few more important takeaways from Prince Charles's speech and the conference:

Demand organic—you're not being an elitist, we promise. In his opening remarks, author Eric Schlosser took the food industry to task for labeling anyone who wants organic food as "elitist."

"The chemical companies and biotech companies like to dismiss organic food as something trendy and elitist," he said. "It isn't. It really is a matter of life and death."

Not only are the pesticides and fertilizers used in conventional agriculture poisonous, but the farming system deprives farm workers of making an adequate living and threatens the health of their children when the workers come home covered in pesticide residues. If that's not enough to convince you, here are 12 more reasons to demand organic.

Doing so is increasingly important in light of the upcoming Farm Bill debates. "We have the facts on our side, we have the truth," said Maria Rodale, who attended the conference.

"Since we are not nearly as well funded as the toxic chemical companies, the only power we have is with our unified voices. It's time to fight. To act with strength and conviction. If enough Americans band together to demand a healthy food system, we may have a chance of saving ourselves."

Watch out for greenwashing. "What is a truly sustainable food system? We should be very clear, or you'll simply have the system we have now just dipped in greenwash," Prince Charles said.

Don't settle for unsubstantiated claims like "natural" or "no-spray;" the USDA Organic seal is the only truly reliable way to ensure you're getting sustainable food.

Catch up on what you missed. You can watch clips of the Prince's speech and other panels from yesterday's conference online at the Washington Post's website. See more pictures on the Georgetown University site.

http://www.rodale.com/organic-farming-and-world-hunger?page=0,0

Unconstitutional, unethical, unscientific

The Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India Bill, if passed, will adversely affect agriculture, health of humans and animals, and the environment, causing unparalleled harm.

*** Pushpa M. Bhargava**

It is now widely accepted that the existing procedure in India (and even elsewhere) for regulation of genetic engineering technology is faulty and insufficient. It was for this reason that Jairam Ramesh, then Minister for Environment and Forests, put an indefinite moratorium on the open release of genetically engineered Bt brinjal, which was approved by the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee of the Ministry on October 14, 2009.

The Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) Bill, proposed to be put up to Parliament, claims to take care of the deficiencies in the existing system of approval of genetically modified (GM) crops. As it turns out, the Bill is unconstitutional, unethical, unscientific, self-contradictory, and not people-oriented.

It suffers from greater flaws and deficiencies than the present system. If passed, it will seriously and adversely affect agriculture, health of humans and animals, and the environment, causing unparalleled harm.

BRAI will consist of three full-time and two part-time members. It will have three divisions, each headed by a Chief Regulatory Officer. It will be supported by a Risk Assessment Unit, an Enforcement Unit, a Monitoring Office, a Product Ruling Committee, an Environmental Appraisal Panel, Scientific Advisory Panels, an Inter-ministerial Governing Board, a Biotechnology Advisory Council, and State Biotechnology Regulatory Advisory Committees.

These bodies would consist mostly of bureaucrats who are likely to have little knowledge of the highly complex issues that arise in today's biotechnology. No civil society participation is proposed anywhere. Even the proposed Biotechnology Regulatory Appellate Tribunal will not accept complaints from civil society, in spite of the fact that the Bill directly or indirectly affects every citizen. It is not even clear which department of the Government of India will service BRAI. The Convener of the Selection Committee for members of BRAI will be from the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), which is a vendor of genetic engineering (the technology that BRAI is supposed to regulate) in the country.

The Bill says the members of BRAI will be persons of integrity. There is, however, no requirement of integrity for members of any of the other committees mentioned above! The Bill is unconstitutional as agriculture is a State subject, and it takes away from the State government the authority to take decisions on GM plant products.

In this connection, it is noteworthy that more than 10 States cutting across political affiliations formally told Mr. Ramesh in 2009-2010 that they would not permit Bt brinjal to be released in their territories.

No public consultation

Article 28 of the Bill states the information declared by BRAI "confidential commercial information" will not come under the RTI Act, and there is no way civil society can challenge its decision to declare any information confidential.

In spite of the fact that BRAI encompasses activities that would virtually affect every Indian, there is no mention in the Bill of public consultation. Articles 81, 86 and 87.2, which allow BRAI to override any existing law in the areas covered by BRAI, contradict Article 86, which says "the provisions shall be in addition to, and not in derogation of, any other law for the time being in force."

The definition of modern biotechnology in Article 3 (r) is absurd as it excludes a large number (over 25) of areas such as peptide synthesis, immuno-technology, tissue culture, stem cells and nano-biotechnology that are an integral part of today's biotechnology.

Not only that, it would make techniques that are used in everyday research in modern biology such as isolation or sequencing of DNA and the PCR technique illegal, unless approved by BRAI in every specific case.

So every university in the country teaching these extremely widely used techniques will have to get BRAI permission for teaching them to undergraduate and postgraduate students. Funnier is the inclusion in Schedule I (which lists organisms and products "which

should be regulated by the Authority") of cloned animals, DNA vaccines, and stem cell-based products. There is no mention of them in the main text of the Bill.

Schedule 1 also includes "products of synthetic biology for human or animal use." I have been in the business of modern biology for six decades and seen the modern biological evolution from very close quarters with more than 20 of my friends having won Nobel prizes but, for the life of me, I cannot make out what is meant by "products of synthetic biology."

In fact, if one strictly followed item 2(d) of Schedule 1, no organ transplantation would be possible in the country without BRAI permission! One would also have expected that the Bill, if it was people-oriented, to state the procedure to be adopted before approval of a GM product. The first step should be to determine the need for the product through a socio-economic survey and analysis. If there is need, then one should determine if there are cheaper, better and well-established alternatives such as smart or molecular breeding, organic agriculture, or use of Integrated Pest Management or bio-pesticides in the case of GM products containing a foreign pesticidal gene.

If it is concluded that there is no alternative to, say, a GM crop, one would need to state a mechanism for deciding what tests the GM crop would need to undergo, and a statement of who will do the tests to ensure public credibility. There is no provision in the Bill for an independent testing laboratory for GM crops, in which civil society would have confidence.

No mention of mandatory labelling

There is no mention of mandatory labelling of GM food products, and there is no protection provided to, say, farmers whose fields growing, for example products of organic agriculture, get contaminated with a GM product of the neighbouring farm.

Article 62 under "Offences and Penalties" is unprecedented. It implies that anyone making a statement about a GM crop which BRAI decides is false or misleading, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend up to three months and also with a fine which may extend to Rs. 5 lakh.

BRAI will not be obliged to state the basis of its decision which is not challengeable by any member of civil society. The Bill thus assumes that all the wisdom of biotechnology lies with the five members of the Authority, and what thousands of leading scientists say will cut no ice with the members of BRAI. One may justifiably ask why this Bill. The reasons are clear. Food business is the biggest in the world. Whosoever controls it will control the world. To control food production, one needs to control just seed and agrochemicals production.

This is what a handful of multinational seed companies, which are also producers of agrochemicals such as pesticides and weedicides, are attempting to do through patented GM crops. These companies are located in the United States, and liaise closely with the U.S. government. In fact, one of the biggest quarrels between the U.S. and Europe is that Europe, by and large, does not allow GM crops and requires appropriate labelling of all food products that contain more than 0.9 per cent of GM material. No such labelling is required in the U.S.

where, therefore, a person today does not know if he is consuming GM food. Till a few years ago, there was no significant opposition to GM crops in India. In fact, the mechanism set up by the Government of India, ostensibly to regulate GM products, largely worked as a vendor of GM products, serving the interests of seed and agrochemical MNCs.

But, then, people of India became wiser and better-informed. Consequently, against all odds and expectations of the MNCs, and of the U.S. government and the rulers in India, we had an indefinite moratorium on Bt brinjal, and the opposition to GM crops became a force to reckon with. Some components of the existing regulatory system have also begun to assert themselves. As of today, at least five States (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh) have formally declared that they will not allow field trials and/or open release of any GM crop.

So, the present system had to be disabled, and roadblocks to fulfilling the ambition of the U.S. and the seed MNCs removed. What better way to achieve this than by BRAI - so the government thought. But, I believe, the GoI has again underestimated the collective wisdom of the people of India!

(* Former Vice-Chairman, National Knowledge Commission.)

http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/article2752711.ece?homepage=true

ANALYSIS-WTO risks its future by keeping Doha talks alive

*** Doha talks using up oxygen needed for WTO to develop * China, India and Brazil keen to stick with Doha * Others begin to examine side agreements, possibly outside WTO**

* Tom Miles

GENEVA, Dec 22 (Reuters) - The 153 members of the World Trade Organization agree on two things: We're in a hole. And we must keep digging.

The hole is the Doha Development Round, a decade-old negotiation that was billed as the next stage of trade liberalisation after the creation of the WTO itself.After repeated failures to clinch a deal, Doha is on life-support. But nobody is prepared to kill it off.

"There is a Russian proverb that says 'Don't chop off the branch you are sitting on'," WTO Director General Pascal Lamy told trade ministers, defending the body at its biennial conference in Geneva last Saturday.

The ministers had collectively acknowledged that the Doha round was unlikely to be concluded in the near future, but promised to keep working towards it, despite a gulf in opinions - especially between United States and China - that makes it almost unthinkable that the WTO could reach consensus.

Trade diplomats like to point out that the WTO is more than Doha alone, and failure to complete Doha does not mean the end of the WTO, since the body also monitors world trade and arbitrates disputes brought to it by member states.

But with so much negotiating capital already tied up in Doha, every new proposal to modernise WTO rules is seen part of a wider wrangle over the trade round, paralysing discussion.

And if the WTO does not keep the world's trade rulebook up to date, it risks losing its position as the global arbiter. Recent allegations of protectionism, such as currency manipulation and environmental taxes, are outside the WTO rules, or at best a grey area. Lamy has blamed the paralysis on a "crisis of multilateralism": a failure of diplomacy that has also hobbled negotiations on the euro zone crisis and global climate talks.

"The international system can't be in good shape because the members of the international system are in bad shape," he said at a briefing a fortnight before the conference. "They've got very little energy left for international compromise."

Doha was originally meant to help developing economies, but that idea looks out of date now that India, Brazil and most of all China have grown into trading superpowers.

For that reason some officials say Doha, launched at the same time that China was accepted into the WTO, was doomed from the start.

And equally, that helps explain why China, India and Brazil are its most vocal champions, determined not to let any new ideas gain traction unless there's a payoff.

"There's no question of redefining Doha," Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota said on the eve of the WTO conference. "We agreed on its mandate 10 years ago."

In short, Doha and arguments about Doha are using up all WTO's oxygen and it has been largely unable to evolve for a decade as a result.

WRONG KIND OF SUCCESS

That is not to say global trade governance is not changing at all, and the WTO's ministerial conference notched up two big successes. But both, in their own way, compound the problem.

One was the decision to grant Russia membership after 18 years of talks, so that at last all the big economies will be inside the club.

The other was a long-awaited reform of the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA), which will open $100 billion of government contracts to foreign competition every year.

Russia has promised to play a positive role once it joins midway through 2012, and it may not even get into Doha negotiations, but having another big and opinionated player at the table will not make it any easier to reach consensus.

The procurement agreement is even more pernicious for Doha, since it is a side-agreement, a voluntary pact that only 42 of the WTO's 153 members have signed up to.

For many, the fact that 42 countries could agree is proof that success lies in smaller, "plurilateral" agreements that forge coalitions of the willing rather than those like Doha which include everyone.

Many WTO members, including the EU and the United States, are already discussing setting up an agreement on trade in services, which could liberalise rules on accounting firms, doctors or insurance companies working across borders.

Many countries are also interested in the idea of cutting tariffs on parts used in renewable energy.
Others want to move quickly to capture some of the "easy" wins from Doha, such as reducing cost and red-tape around customs.

But unlike the trade in services, which has an exemption under WTO rules, such side-agreements will only be WTO deals if every WTO member signs up. That is unlikely.

"We do not think that there should be peeling off," said Indian Trade Minister Anand Sharma.

Without the WTO agreeing, what hope for side-deals?

The simple answer is almost every WTO member has already signed separate trade deals, often in a drive for regional integration, for example in telecoms or the trade in endangered species.

The WTO says it is unfazed by regional agreements and says they will not distort world trade as long as there are enough of them.

If everybody has preferences, nobody has preferences, Lamy says.

BUILDING BLOCS

But the flowering of regional trade deals has moved up a gear as the big powers - the United States, the EU and Russia - race to build blocs to compete with each other and with China.

The United States is pushing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), whose members include Australia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Chile.
"Part of our belief ... is saying: 'Let's not handicap ourselves by saying we can only do this one way," U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk told Reuters in an interview.

"It may be that they can become the fuel that ignites a broader discussion about how you merge those into a multilateral stream like Doha."

Lamy played down the suggestion that breakaway groups would damage the WTO and said they were nothing new. Fear of "plurilateral" agreements was generated by paranoia and mistrust between governments, he said.

But some of Lamy's staff are worried and privately blame him for leading the WTO into a dead end by allowing Doha to stifle agreement. Lamy, who is due to step down in September 2013, argues that it is not up to him, but WTO members, and they have consistently chosen the Doha road.

After the latest push to clinch a deal came unstuck earlier this year, Lamy told Reuters that he had no plans to go early.

http://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL6E7NJ2O820111222?sp=true



Calling for justice

*** Shalini Bhutani**

23 Dec, 2011- India's people are no strangers to the excesses of corporations. Accountability, however, particularly in the context of corporate behaviour, is something that the world is struggling to institutionalise. An event held in Bangalore earlier this month marked the anniversary of the Bhopal catastrophe and brought to the fore the many complexities of corporate accountability.



(From left to right) Prof. Elmar Altvater (Germany), Dr. Ricarda Steinbrecher (Germany), Dr. Upendra Baxi (India), Dr. Gianni Tognoni (Italy), Dr. Ibrahima Ly (Senegal), and Prof. Paolo Ramazotti (Italy) were the members of the jury of the Permanent People's Tribunal (PPT) convened to indict agrochemical transnational corporations for gross violations of human rights. Image courtesy author.

The Permanent People's Tribunal ("the PPT") held a session from December 3 to 7, 2011 on "Agrochemical Transnational Corporations". The proceedings before the PPT were initiated during the last three years through the Pesticide Action Network and its partners in response to a call for justice from people across the world for human rights violations against the 'Big Six' of the agriculture and pesticide industry - Monsanto, Syngenta AG, Bayer AG, DuPont, Dow Chemical Company (that has owned Union Carbide Corporation since 2001), and BASF. All these companies were being indicted for violations related to the manufacture and sale of hazardous pesticides and agricultural technologies that have had disastrous impacts on lives, livelihoods, and the environment. The indictment and the testimonies charged them with gross, widespread, and systematic violations of the social, economic, cultural, and political rights of peoples.

While all six corporations had been sent a copy of the indictment, none represented them at the PPT. Along with these six transnational corporations, the governments of the United States, Switzerland, and Germany as the home states of the defendant corporations were also charged with failing to either contain their activities or hold them accountable while they continued to commit these violations. Three international institutions were also listed as defendants. These included the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. The PPT itself, as the name suggests, is a permanent international opinion tribunal established in

Italy in 1979. It has evolved from the International War Crimes Tribunal – better known as theRussell Tribunal. Three institutions were announced at the closing session of the Second Russell Tribunal, of which the PPT was one.

The Universal Declaration of the Rights of People adopted by non-governmental actors at Algiers in Algeria on July 4, 1976, serves as the charter and the founding document of the PPT. Since its inception, it has organised over three dozen sessions on a range of issues. The value of such a body is that it is independent of any state authorities. Of course, it is recognised that the dispensation of justice is a more tedious process, as the PPT does not have the power to impose sanctions or enforce sentences. Nonetheless, as a public opinion tribunal, it cannot be undermined. Unlike formal institutions, the PPT derives its legitimacy and authority from the people.

The PPT particularly takes up cases in which there has been a systematic violation of peoples' rights. The need to bring the case against the agrochemical corporations speaks of the lack of other fora at the domestic or international levels that are able to bring them to book. In some ways, it provides an alternative to mainstream courts. As the opening paragraph of the indictment explains, those who approach it "are without effective recourse to legal avenues for justice, due compensation and remediation". The cases that come before it are those wherein national or international law has been unable to address the issue. Because of the sheer size and scale of their operation, these corporations not only have a wide circle of influence but their corporate conduct has global ramifications. There are equal difficulties in pinning down the governments that further these corporations. For instance, the United States government has withdrawn from the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice ("the ICJ"). It will accept the ICJ's jurisdiction only on a case-to-case basis. In any case, organisations, private enterprises, and individuals cannot have their cases taken to the ICJ, only states can.

In international law, many multilateral environmental agreements do not even have fora to take violations to. On the other hand, international trade agreements that do have their dispute settlement mechanisms only further the interests of capital and commerce. For instance, the World Trade Organization ("the WTO") has a dispute settlement mechanism. Outside of the WTO, in the new age bilateral investment treaties, stronger governments - on behalf of their corporations - are asking for investor-state dispute provisions. Trans-national corporations are increasingly taking recourse to international arbitration tribunals to protect their rights as investors. Thus, for the first time in international law, corporations are being given the right to directly sue governments! At the Bangalore PPT, people were 'suing' corporations. Around 200 people – farmers, farmworkers, families of victims, survivors, environmentalists, bee keepers, health advocates, consumer groups, women's organisations, scientists, and lawyers - all concerned about pesticides and agriculture gathered at the Indian Social Institute. Others joined in through new media tools.

Nineteen people delivered live witness statements either as personal testimonies or technical information to the jury. The jury comprised highly respected individuals from diverse disciplines. Dr. Upendra Baxi (India) acted as the President of the jury. Dr. Elmar Altvater (Germany), Dr. Ibrahima Ly (Senegal), Dr. Ricarda Steinbrecher (Germany), Dr. Paolo Ramazotti (Italy), and Dr. Gianni Tognoni who is also the General Secretary of the PPT in Italy, were the other members.

In the initial findings and recommendations of the tribunal, the jury members, in a 'statement of responsibility', held the indicted corporations responsible for all that they had been charged with. The three specifically indicted states were also found to have failed to comply with their internationally accepted responsibility to promote and protect human rights, especially of vulnerable populations, and their specific customary and treaty obligations in the sphere of environmental protection. Going beyond the indictment, the jury recommended that even host states take the responsibility to, among other things, prosecute the corporations for criminal liability rather than civil liability. The final ruling of the jury, with the detailed opinions of the members, will be available in early 2012. All rulings are sent to major international bodies. Previously, the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva has discussed some of these opinions.

It will be up to peoples' struggles to take this forward. This may be the time of corporate globalisation, but it is also a time for global solidarity. Trans-national corporations and the governments supporting them are seeking global rights. They have to be contained by many local fights. This is just one step towards taking forward the idea of global responsibilities.

http://www.mylaw.net/Article/Calling_for_justice/

INDIA'S "Public Sector Indigenous GM Cotton" A Scientific Fraud:

Coalition for a GM-Free India demands immediate stopping of all public sector transgenic research and an independent enquiry and action against fraudulent scientists.

***Dr G V Ramanjaneyulu ** Kavitha Kuruganti**

New Delhi, 30 Dec, 2011- 2011 ends with a big blot to the Indian scientific community, as was the case in 2010 too. The much-hyped public sector Bt cotton lines (Bikaneri Narma Bt variety and NHH-44 Bt hybrid) touted as the "first indigenous public sector-bred GM crop in India" developed by Central Institute for Cotton Research, Nagpur (CICR) and University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad (UAS) along with Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) is actually found to have a Bt gene originally patented by Monsanto. The ICAR had to withdraw the production of these 'indigenous' GM cotton seeds, based on this development.

In effect the Indian biotechnologists, supported with enormous amounts of taxpayers' money doing research on developing indigenous "biotechnology products" have misled the nation by passing off the Monsanto technology as their own, the Coalition for a GM-Free India stated. The Coalition demanded that the Government stop all transgenic research in the public sector immediately, setup a high-level independent inquiry into the current case as well as all other research projects. It also demanded that this issue be seen as an act of corruption and fraud and severe deterrent action be taken against all the institutions and scientists involved.

In India, the majority of transgenic products in the R&D pipeline are from public sector institutions. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research's "network project on transgenics" had a budgetary provision of Rs 100 crores in the XI Plan.

The Bt cotton in question is the Bikaneri Narma (BN) Bt (variety) and the NHH-44 Bt (hybrid) expressing Bt Cry 1Ac protein. The developers CICR & UAS claimed that BN Bt carries the cry1Ac (Truncated and codon-modified) gene which 'is very similar to the Cry 1Ac toxin expressed by MON 531 event developed by M/s Monsanto as well as event 1 of IIT, Kharagpur', both of which are already under commercial cultivation.

A CICR newsletter (Vol.24, No.2, Apr-June 2008) soon after the GEAC approval for transgenic BN Bt claimed that the development of this Bt cotton was initiated under the World-Bank-funded NATP from 2000 onwards. The Bt cry1AC gene in this instance was supposed to have been developed by the NRCPB of the IARI along with CICR and the transfer into popular cultivars is supposed to be taken up by UAS-Dharwad.

During deliberations in the GEAC about this, the members first gave approval for large-scale field trials (LSTs) during the GEAC meeting on April 2, 2008 and then in the next meeting on 2nd May 2008 reviewed the decision and gave approval for commercialization of BN Bt without conducting LSTs. The rationale was that since the seeds of BN Bt could be saved by farmers, a large scale field trial is tantamount to commercial release! However one year after its much publicized release BN Bt was withdrawn from the market without any explanation and no reports were made available about its performance till then.

The same Bt construct was used to develop hybrid Bt cotton, namely NHH 44. YUVA and Hamara Beej Abhiyan, two constituents of the Coalition for a GM-Free India, brought out a report in 2010, on "Performance of CICR's Bt Cotton in 2009 – a survey report" (available at http: // ind iagm info.or g/?pa ge_id =238) which showed that BN Bt had failed to perform in farmers' fields and the claims were belied.

The worse thing was that there was no accountability fixed on anyone for this failure. In this report released in October 2010 itself, the Coalition demanded that 'CICR come out in the open to state exactly what the problem is which made BN Bt seed supply vanish from the market exactly one season after its entry' (pp.11).

Now it has come to light through an RTI that there is nothing indigenous about this Bt construct used by CICR & UAS and it has Monsanto's cry1Ac gene. As per news media stories, the NARS appears to be defending this episode by explaining it away as "contamination". It is interesting to note that scientists who have rubbished "contamination" concerns expressed by civil society groups and others both for their environmental and IPR implications, are resorting to this phenomenon as their explanation now!

This raises a few pertinent questions:

· How is it that the regulators who "rigorously" evaluated the product could not correctly identify the gene construct used? It puts to question the capabilities of the regulators.

· Here it must also be highlighted that the then Director of CICR, Dr.Khadi was also a member of GEAC, a clear case of conflict of interest.

· If it is indeed a case of contamination and the seed production had to be stopped given that Monsanto has proprietary rights over the genes and technology, what lies in store for all the other GM crops in the pipeline since contamination is inevitable?

· Is it contamination or is it a scientific fraud related to incapability with regard to indigenous technology?

· Who owns BN Bt cotton and NHH 44 Bt cotton now? Have the Indian biotechnologists gratuitously gifted these to Monsanto through this action?

· Is this all the country gets after big ticket investments on GM technology ignoring viable and safer mechanisms to deal with pests, diseases and climate threat?

This episode also highlights that the IPR issues related to transgenic technologies and the assumption by the Indian scientific community that they can use technologies patented by Monsanto and its ilk needs a serious re-think.

The Indian regulators, public sector scientists and NARS institutions are intent on promoting GM technologies to the exclusion of any other options despite serious evidence on the biosafety hazards connected with transgenics.

In the light of this fiasco, claims about enormous indigenous capabilities (in this field) sound hollow. Such scientific frauds raise the question about how far the biotechnology scientists and regulators will go to force GM technologies into our agriculture and what motivates them. Why should the public be trusting these scientists who do not hestitate to resort to fraudulent practices?

Unfortunately this is not the first case of scientific fraud that the nation is witnessing. Last year witnessed the six premier Science Academies using plagiarized material to recommend and promote the release of Bt brinjal.

Despite the report being dismissed by the then Minister for Environment & Forests as lacking scientific rigour, the Academies merely revised the section on Bt brinjal a little and put it back in the public domain claiming that they stand by their conclusions.

There was no enquiry into the incident, no explanation about how it happened and no action taken against any entity. A clear demonstration of the contempt in which the scientific community holds the nation and the public, says the Coalition for a GM-Free India. It is interesting to note that Dr P Ananda Kumar of NRCPB is one of the lead 'protagonists' in these two scientific scandals.

Further, Dr K C Bansal who coordinated the ICAR network project on transgenics till recently is now heading the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (custodian of plant genetic resources of the country!).

"The current UAS-D/CICR/IARI (NRCPB) fiasco proves once again that the Indian scientific community is not averse to scientific frauds and misleading the nation and the people.

We do not need this technology force-fed to our farmers and consumers, we have sufficient workable and viable solutions for the agrarian crisis and demand that the government and public sector institutions work on these solutions rather than fraudulently promote GM technology", said the Coalition.

It should also be remembered by certain political parties advocating public sector GM seeds that an inherently unsafe product does not become safer just because it comes from the public sector. In fact, accountability issues are murkier here, as has been seen in the case of the failure of CICR's Bt cotton in the field, where large scale field trials have been waived off in favour of public sector GM research!

“All of this is ultimately experimentation happening at the expense of hapless Indian farmers and this is unconscionable. Severe deterrent action at the highest level is called for, in this case. We demand that a white paper be published on the investments made on this front so far by the government.

Further, until all questions are answered including the actual technologies being used in the public sector transgenic R&D, IPR issues, future contamination possibilities etc., all funding to public sector transgenic projects should be immediately stopped. These scarce and valuable resources should be utilised for taking proven, safe, farmer-controlled technologies to the farmers”, demanded the Coalition.

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Former SC judges oppose Bill on Biotechnology

The former judges of Supreme Court S P Jeevan Reddy, Kuldeep Singh and M H Kania in a similar statement have expressed serious concern saying the ministry mandated to promote bio-technology was introducing the bill. They also said that the regulatory framework should have experts from other related ministries such as environment, agriculture, health and rural development. "The primary mandate of any biotechnology bill must be to ensure safety to consumers, farmers and the environment and not to facilitate quick clearances," the judges said.

They also found the bill lacking in ensuring that citizens have a right to reject a Genetically Modified food, gram sabha refusal to all sowing of GM food crops and ensure that there is no contamination of environment because of GM crops. "The penalties for transgressing of the rights of consumers or farmers to be GM free and for any environmental damage must be of a deterrent nature and quickly enforceable," they said. In another set of view, former chief justices of India, A S Anand, Madan Mohan Punchhi and K N Singh had claimed that the government does not have legal competence to set regulatory mechanisms for universities as it was a domain of the state legislative bodies.

Their view was sought by Association of Self Financing Universities on HRD ministry's Education Tribunal Bill and Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical, Medical and Universities Bill. These bills aim at setting up regulatory mechanisms at centre and state levels to address issues of concern in higher education including capitation fee, inadequate teaching facility and problem related to teachers.

The views of the former chief justices are based on entries in the Constitution related to matters on incorporation, regulation and winding up of the universities. They said it was exclusively a state subject. The government, however, differ saying that there already is the University Grants Commission set up under a Central Law to regulate universities. In addition to contrary legal views, Members of Parliament cutting across party lines have also opposed the proposed laws on different grounds.

http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/NewDelhi/Former-SC-judges-oppose-Bill-on-Biotechnology/Article1-771742.aspx

Indian farmers voiced raised in WTO

Bharatiya Krishak Samaj, President Dr. Krishan Bir Chaudhary, Condemned the double standards policy of WTO in Geneva convention.

A group of countries has called on countries to not use their WTO flexibilities in the name of fighting protectionism.

BKS reaction to this pledge .'Indian farmers condemn the double standards of countries that proposed an additional pledge against protectionism.

While, the developed countries resorted to heavily protecting their agri-business corporations, it is travesty of justice to call upon the developing countries and LDCs to remove the minimum support structures created to safeguard the livelihoods of millions of small and marginal farmers.

Without the removal of Green Box subsidies (a great protection given to agri-business corporations by the developed countries), the developed country demands in this pledge that developing countries and least developed countries should not be able exercise their rights under the WTO to raise their applied tariffs to their bound rate is unfair.

Mr. Chaudhary said that agricultural liberalization in India has already caused 256000 Indian farmers to commit suicide. We call on India not to sign this pledge or agree to any standstill at the WTO.

http://www.newsleaks.in/indian-farmers-voiced-raised-in-wto/

National Convention of Bharatiya Krishak Samaj
10-11 Dec. 2011, Nashik (MHR)





Dr. Krishan Bir Chaudhary, President Bharatiya Krishak Samaj, participating in WTO 8th ministerial meeting in Geneva, 15 to 17 Dec. 2011





Dr. Krishan Bir Chaudhay, President, Bharatiya Krishak Samaj addressing in a meeting with Europeon Economic Consultative Committee On EU-India FTA, WASME - Noida on 20th Dec.2011





Dr. Krishan Bir Chaudhary, President, Bharatiya Krishak Samaj, addressing the meeting on FDI in Retail organised by NEER Foundation, BDS Institute, Meerut (U.P.) on 24th Dec.2011





Lamy, UN rights expert in row over food security

*** Kanaga Raja**

Geneva, 20 Dec, 2011- A squabble broke out between World Trade Organisation (WTO) Director-General Pascal Lamy and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter, on the sidelines of the eighth WTO Ministerial Conference, which concluded on 17 December.

The spat was over a report that was produced by UN rights expert Olivier de Schutter in November that assessed "the compatibility between the WTO and efforts to protect the human right to adequate food " as part of the post-crisis food security agenda.

In his report titled "The World Trade Organization and the Post-Global Food Crisis Agenda", the rights expert had argued that "the WTO continues to move forward and operate in isolation without sufficient consideration of the consequences of the global food crisis for agricultural trade and food security and how this requires a critical rethinking of trade policy and food security."

He had added: "The Doha Round negotiations continue as if the state of the world food economy is the same as it was in the period 2001-2006. If the Doha Round continues on its present track, future agricultural trade rules are unlikely to be well-suited to support global policy efforts to address food security and may potentially further fragment efforts to develop effective global governance for food security."

Calling on WTO Members to redefine how food security is treated in multilateral trade agreements, Olivier de Schutter, in his report, had said that food security is presently treated under the WTO as the grounds for exceptions for a very limited range of trade liberalization commitments.

"A more appropriate re-framing of agricultural trade rules would explicitly recognize that market-determined outcomes do not necessarily improve food security and that the purpose of agricultural trade rules should be to facilitate food security-enhancing policies," even though this may require limiting the pace of trade liberalization in some sectors and/or granting States additional policy flexibility in pursuit of internationally recognized food security objectives, he had added.

WTO Members should preserve and create a range of flexibilities in the Doha Round negotiations in order to ensure that the future international trade regime operates in lock step with multilateral and national efforts to address food insecurity, he had recommended.

In a letter to the Special Rapporteur rebutting his report, Lamy said that he wished to take this opportunity to summarize where he agreed and disagreed with the Special Rapporteur in three important areas: the objective of food security in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), the role of trade in global food security, and the scope within WTO rules to ensure that Members have access to flexible policy options to achieve their food security objectives.

The letter, dated 14 December, and the WTO Secretariat's comments on an earlier version of the rights expert's report have been posted on the WTO's website.

In his letter to Olivier de Schutter, the Director-General said firstly that he agreed with the rights expert that food security is an essential policy objective for governments.

Governments have a sovereign right to pursue policies to achieve food security within their international obligations. WTO Members have placed food security at the center of both the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) negotiations.

Lamy said: "Food security is explicitly mentioned several times in the AoA, is referenced in the Marrakesh Decision on measures concerning the possible negative effects of the reform programme on net food importing developing countries and is

mentioned explicitly (or has led the positions taken by Members) in several provisions of the December 2008 DDA draft modalities on agriculture.

I am convinced that WTO Members are fully aware of the food security objective and, indeed, that it is integral to their negotiating strategy."

Secondly, Lamy said that he fundamentally disagreed with the Special Rapporteur's assertion that countries need to limit reliance on international trade to achieve food security objectives.

"On the contrary, there is agreement among most UN-led experts that international trade is part of the package of solutions to achieve food security.

The UN High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis in their 2010 Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action noted that 'more liberalized international markets would contribute to global food and nutrition security through increased trade volumes and access to diverse sources of food imports.'"

Lamy agreed with the rights expert that the current state of global food security requires policies that encourage and strengthen investment in agriculture, and ensure appropriate safety nets for urban and rural poor.

Current WTO rules in agriculture and possible outcomes from the DDA allow policy space and flexibility in these areas.

Hence, the Agreement on Agriculture leaves developing countries broad room to implement measures to achieve their national objectives, including food security, notably through Green Box support and Article 6.2 development programmes.

"As you rightly mention, the Doha Round would further increase this flexibility by relaxing some of the Green Box criteria to make it easier to use by developing countries, for example, on public stockholdings for food security purposes."

On the other hand, Lamy questioned the report's recommendations on interventions aimed at insulating domestic from international markets.

He said: "Policy tools like public stockholding for food security purposes, tariff rate quotas, safeguard measures or the use of marketing boards can indeed be legitimate tools, under some circumstances.

However, if used improperly, these actions can introduce distortions and undermine economic efficiency, exacerbating the negative impacts on poor consumers of high food prices.

In addition, given that about 60 per cent of developing countries' agricultural exports go to other developing countries, these suggested interventions increase the vulnerability of agricultural producers in exporting developing countries by reducing access to their main export markets."

He added: "Highly trade distorting support, the use of export subsidies, high levels of protection, and unpredictable trade measures restricting imports or exports were among the causes of the price spikes in 2008 and 2010.

Policies that create distortions in the global market threaten rather than improve global food security. In agriculture WTO rules distinguish between practices that are trade distorting and those with limited trade impacts – encouraging countries to move towards less trade-distorting practices."

"I am surprised by the quasi-absence of reference in your report to rules applicable to export prohibitions and restrictions on food products.

This issue is complex and controversial, but again there is a wide consensus that those measures, and the architecture of multilateral trade rules applying to them, have some significant influence on food security," Lamy said in his letter.

Lamy agreed that food security concerns require improved international governance. "However, I am not convinced of the need to create new processes to discuss and evaluate food security and trade.

Many international, regional and national organizations already provide in-depth analysis of trade and food security."

For example, said Lamy, the G-20-led process on

price volatility in agricultural markets has led to the creation of the Agricultural Market Information System in September 2011, in order to improve information about certain agricultural markets.

Within the WTO, many tracks are also already available including the Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture to negotiate an improvement and strengthening of the AoA; the regular Committee on Agriculture to monitor implementation issues; the SPS Committee on food safety and animal and plant health; and various ad hoc informal information sessions organized by the WTO Secretariat or WTO Members.

Lamy went on to invite the Special Rapporteur to the WTO to present his report to the Members.

In a statement issued on 16 December, Olivier de Schutter said that "Globalization creates big winners and big losers.

But where food systems are concerned, losing out means sinking into poverty and hunger.

A vision of food security that deepens the divide between food-surplus and food-deficit regions, between exporters and importers, and between winners and losers, simply cannot be accepted."

He added: "The impact of trade rules can no longer be seen at the level of States alone. It must be sensitive to what really determines food security: who produces for whom, at what price, under which conditions, and with what economic, social and environmental repercussions. The right to food is not a commodity, and we must stop treating it that way."

The rights expert said that he shared with Lamy the view, as he puts it, that"food security is an essential policy objective for governments." He also welcomed Lamy's invitation to present the findings of his briefing note to WTO members.

However, said Olivier de Schutter, "we must ensure that the debate starts from the correct premise. This premise must acknowledge the dangers for poor countries in relying excessively on trade.

We must also assess the compatibility of WTO disciplines and the Doha agenda with the food security agenda.

Without such a fundamental reassessment, we will remain wedded to food systems where the most efficient producers with the biggest economies of scale are relied upon to feed food-deficit regions, and where the divide only gets bigger."

"This may look like food security on paper, but it is an approach that has failed spectacularly. The reality on the ground is that vulnerable populations are consigned to endemic hunger and poverty," said Olivier de Schutter.

He noted that the food bills of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) increased five- or six-fold between 1992 and 2008. Imports now account for around 25 per cent of their current food consumption.

"These countries are caught in a vicious cycle. The more they are told to rely on trade, the less they invest in domestic agriculture. And the less they support their own farmers, the more they have to rely on trade.

In the current climate, this means relying on imports of grain at historically volatile prices. This year alone, the food bills of LDCs soared by one third. These price shocks are felt by poor urban and rural consumers alike."

Unfortunately, said Olivier de Schutter, "the open markets demanded by Mr. Lamy do not function as perfectly as he would like to think. Food moves where purchasing power is highest, not where needs are most urgent."

"By promoting this trade-centric approach, we miss the simplest of win-wins. If we were to support developing world small-holders, who are often the poorest groups, we could enable them to move out of poverty, and enable local food production to meet local needs.

In this context, trade would complement local production, not justify its abandonment. The urban poor would have access to fresh and nutritious foods, and the gap between the farm-gate price and the retail price would narrow.

This however requires policy space to limit price volatility at domestic level: it is this policy space that the WTO rules are reducing."

"The policies currently shaped by the international trade regime are not supportive of these small-scale farmers. Instead, we impose a lose-lose upon them.

They do not benefit from the opportunities that access to international markets represents for some. But it is they who are the victims of the pressure on land, water and natural resources on which they depend, for which they increasingly have to compete with the agro-export sector."

"In the long term, poor net-food-importing countries will not be helped by being fed. They will be helped by being able to feed themselves. This is the consensus of the post-global food price crisis world that even the G20 has recognized. It is disappointing that the WTO continues to fight the battles of the past," Olivier de Schutter concluded.

In a statement issued on 17 December, the global network of NGOs and social movements called Our World Is Not For Sale (OWINFS) said it fully supported the conclusions of Olivier de Schutter, that the WTO is adversely affecting food security and sovereignty of Southern countries and small-scale producers and poor consumers in the North.

The WTO Secretariat underscores the multiple facilities given to developing countries to subsidize their farmers but ignores totally the lack of financial capacity of the poor developing countries to benefit from these facilities, it said.

It added that Olivier de Schutter demonstrated that the AoA has devastated local agriculture and eroded food security and food sovereignty. This also applies to net food importing countries because their ability to grow their own food is destroyed making them even more dependent on big exporter countries and their corporations.

This also justifies the power of agribusiness to take control over their natural resources including land, water, seeds and commodify the traditional systems of cultivation and biodiversity.

OWINFS believed that the WTO is violating the right to food, and fully agreed with Olivier de Schutter when he stated that "in the long term, poor net-food-importing countries will not be helped by being fed. They will be helped by being able to feed themselves.

There is increasing global consensus on this issue, the group said, adding that it is time for a fundamental transformation of the food system. OWINFS further said that the following changes to the WTO are essential for a global system that would ensure food sovereignty and food security to develop:

Priority and policy space has to be guaranteed to small-scale farmers and their constituencies to ensure their right to protect their livelihoods and food sovereignty and be able to choose the best policies for themselves and their communities; and developing countries should have the right to raise tariffs and use other measures to protect farmers' livelihoods, rural development, and food security.

This ability, called the Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) in the WTO, must be far more flexible than is reflected in current WTO proposals for it to be useful in achieving food security. No additional commitments on Agriculture should be required of LDCs.

The civil society groups also highlighted that developing countries should be able to exempt products from any potential future tariff cuts as they deem necessary to protect farmers' income, food security and rural development; the Special Products designation in the WTO must be expanded.

The group's statement also categorically rejected any standstill on tariffs in agriculture. Export subsidies should be disciplined, including so-called "Green Box" subsidies; trade rules must be modified to facilitate proper regulation of commodities trade to prevent excessive speculation and volatility in the global markets; and special attention should be paid to banning subsidisation of agro-fuels, as they have diverted land away from food production and aggravated ecological degradation.

http://www.twnside.org.sg/title2/wto.info/2011/twninfo111217.htm

Why is There Arsenic in Our Chicken?

*** Sarah**

As a survivalist you already know that big government is only out for itself and the big businesses it serves - those being agribusiness and Big Pharma, of course.



This is likely to be one of the many reasons why you have decided to rely on just God and yourself to feed and protect your family and you.

After all, no one else will. Although we should be able to hope that something as basic and necessary as food be safe and secure, too many instances of E. coli and other harmful bacteria found in our food supply have told us otherwise.

But did you ever imagine that your chicken could be laced with arsenic? It sounds like a mystery only the CSI team could solve, doesn't it? Make no mistake; this is no made-for-TV crime drama, but rather a typical case of agribusiness, Big Pharma, and the FDA once again being in bed together.

Several objective and scientifically sound studies have shown that arsenic is present in chicken feed, which means it can easily spread out of their digestive systems and into their muscles to collect and become more concentrated every time the chickens eat. Not only has the FDA not denied this, but it also initially claimed that the arsenic comes back out in the chickens' feces.

However- no surprise – there is no scientific proof to support this fanciful claim. Even with the arsenic-fed chicken now being pulled from supermarket shelves, both the FDA and the National Chicken Council can't completely admit they made an egregious error, and they continue to insist that this really isn't a problem and that chicken is still safe to eat. But why is that?

The Ménage à Troi Between the FDA, Big Pharma, and Agribusiness Dates Back Many Decades

The brouhaha all started in June 2011 when one Big Pharma giant announced that it would discontinue selling an arsenic-based drug called Roxarsone (also referred to as 3-Nitroâ). This abrupt promise followed the FDA's findings that trace amounts of inorganic Roxarsone were detected in 100 broiler chickens that were already distributed to our grocery stores. Broiler chickens are sold both in the U.S. and around the globe.

However, this is hardly a case of, “Oops, how on earth did this occur?” Organic Roxarsone is purposely added to chicken feed, which is then consumed by commercially raised chickens and, in turn, consumed by you and me. In fact, it's neither accidental nor is it new. The FDA first approved its use in chicken feed back in 1944.

Adding organic Roxarsone to chicken feed, the FDA claims, is four-fold in purpose:

? To control coccidiosis
? To promote weight gain
? Feed efficiency
? Improve pigmentation in chickens

Well, this certainly explains, among other reasons (growth hormones, much?) why your two-month old chickens aren't nearly as large as the ones sold in the supermarket. It also clears up why after you've butchered your homegrown chickens the fat, muscle, and skin are such different colors from the ones sold commercially. And to the question of feed efficiency, it's not clear whether "feed "is used as a noun or a verb. Although verb sounds plausible, either way, it sounds scary!

But wait a minute, if organic Roxarsone is added to chicken feed, how did inorganic Roxarsone end up in these broiler chickens? If you are feeling as though you've had a game of bait and switch played on you, don't worry!

The FDA promises that the arsenic in both forms is in such small amounts that it is not harmful, and you should absolutely continue buying agribusiness chickens. This is why, upon discovery, they immediately pulled the chickens from the supermarkets.

The FDA is at a loss to explain how Roxarsone shifted from its original organic state to an inorganic state. Any high-school level chemistry course will prove that Roxarsone is not stable, and that it easily switches once digested by chickens. So either this was one of the biggest "oopses," or there is something far more sinister is going on.

The FDA wants you to know a few more things. The inorganic form of Roxarsone is carcinogenic and can cause anything from liver damage to myriad types of cancer, and the organic version is not harmful in any way. Wait! Didn't I just say that the FDA says that both forms aren't harmful? You need a scorecard to keep up with their doublespeak!

The FDA Giveth, and the FDA Taketh Away

In typical Orwellian fashion, the FDA not only makes arbitrary decisions that can harm the public en masse, but then it wields its mighty sword to enforce producers of myriad harmless healing and natural substances, such as elderberry juice and raw milk, to jump through hoops or even stand in the way of approval.

This is how the FDA prioritizes its responsibilities. To prove the depths of its blatant disregard for humanity, the FDA has stated it will only address the arsenic problem in U.S. chicken meat. However, only if other countries demand they do the same, will it address this issue globally.

In other words, they're perfectly happy allowing cancerous meat to go by unhindered so long as no one says anything. Who wants to bet nothing happens domestically and that agribusiness will find some other Big Pharma producer to emulate Roxarsone.

Now that it's crystal clear where big government stands and that they continually verbalize how little they care about us, if you haven't already started, it's really time to take the power back!

Raise Your Own Chickens

Raising chickens is not as difficult as you might think, and it offers tons of benefits ranging from having full control over what you feed them to being able to eat eggs produced right in your own back yard. Like batteries, arsenic is not included!

If you don't live in a rural area, the first thing you'll want to do is make sure you can legally raise chickens in your backyard. Search for your local chicken ordinances, which should be available on your county governmen's site, or call your local government to make sure.

The next step is to find your chickens. Local feed stores may sell young chicks, or you can buy fertilized eggs. Just make sure that whichever source you're getting the chicks or eggs from is not a standard chicken farm, because the arsenic will likely be in the animals already.

The easiest way to mitigate that is to search for organic farms in your area or make sure the feed store is supplied by organic farmers. If you're fortunate enough, you already know farmers in your area who raise chickens and who are happy to sell you some.

If you aren't taking the mother hen with you, which is unlikely, remember that it's cold outside. Chickens are the most vulnerable when they are either still in the egg or have just hatched.

If you're starting with an egg, you will need to get an incubator and make sure it's kept at a constant 99.5 degrees. You also need to turn the eggs at least three times a day, and make sure there's some moisture present in the incubator.

More detailed instructions will come with the incubator you purchase; however this pdf should give you a general idea of what to expect as all incubators work off the same premise. Provided everything goes well, you'll get new chicks in about twenty-one days! Newly hatched chickens should be in a coop. If you haven't built one by the time they are born, they can temporarily be kept in a sturdy cardboard box or in a rabbit-sized animal cage.

It is recommended that you build a coop whether your chickens are going to be free-range or not, as it gives them a safe haven from predators when they sleep. Many chickens prefer to sleep elevated, so running a pole or tree branch through the chicken wire from one end to another (either the width or the length) will give them a perch from which to sleep.

If you are building a chicken coop, it's best to include nesting bins in your initial designs. This is perfect because in about nine months, your hens will be old enough to brood, and they will be very happy you created a safe and private place to do this. Nesting boxes can always be added later, too.

Your chickens will return the favor by giving you many new chicks, and for this second generation of chickens, you won't have to use an incubator because nothing beats what nature does all on its own. You will need to regulate the temperature for a little while, but as they grow and get hardier, you can steadily decrease the temperature and eliminate this step from the chickens' daily care.

For instructions on keeping the coop the perfect temperature for brand new chicks and mature chickens, this article will be extremely helpful to you. As your chicks mature, this same article will ensure that your egg production doesn't diminish just because the sun goes down early in the winter.

It's fine to feed them chicken feed, but just be wary of where you're purchasing the feed! Again, make sure it's from organic sources.

As the expression goes, “you are what you eat,” and in this case, you are also what your chickens eat. This will help your chickens grow healthy and happy, which is essential to having safe eggs and meat.

In addition to feeding them well, once they are grown enough, you will want to fence off a space in your yard and let them run around. This allows their muscles to mature naturally, and they won't get sick from being locked up in small spaces.

Given their size in relation to most livestock, chickens don't need a large outdoor area to get the needed exercise, so if you have a small back yard, this is fine. Once they're grown, chickens require very little maintenance in comparison to other animals you may have at home.

Buy Organic Chicken Meat and Eggs

If your neighborhood forbids keeping chickens in your backyard or you just don't want to deal with live animals, don't despair.

You don't have to consume arsenic if you are very selective with the type of chicken you buy. Be sure to purchase chicken products only from organic farms. You can check out what type of organic chicken and eggs are available in your local grocery store, and research those companies online to make sure they're using safe products.

Organic chicken should keep you much safer from arsenic poisoning and myriad other FDA-approved harmful and unnatural additives, as organic farmers are committed to safe practices. They do everything you would do at home from feeding them natural feed to allowing them to run around freely.

We can't rely on the FDA and agribusiness to protect us. We have to look to a higher power than big government and their bedfellows and do what we can for ourselves. That's the only way we can protect our loved ones and ourselves in this dystopian modern world.

http://www.offthegridnews.com/2011/12/26/why-is-there-arsenic-in-our-chicken/

India Japan on Course to Trade Target of US $ 25 Billion by 2014

Invites Japanese Companies to Partner in Infrastructure Pharma, Energy & Agro Processing Sector

28-Dec-2011 - Shri Anand Sharma the union Minister for Commerce, Industry & Textiles in his address to business delegation led by Mr. Yoshihiko Noda the Prime Minister of Japan, said that, "The year 2011 is a watershed year in our relations as we signed the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) during my visit to Japan in February.

The signing of CEPA has begun a whole new chapter in our economic partnership, unlocking the true potential of trade between our two countries. I am hopeful that CEPA will further deepen economic engagement in terms of Trade in Goods, Services, and Investment; contributing immensely to mutual prosperity".

Japan is an invaluable & strategic partner in the process of India's development. India-Japan has to play major role in the globally changing economic landscape, he added.

Shri Sharma stated that, as a result of coming in to force of CEPA, the bilateral trade is likely to increase substantially and expressed hope that the target of US $ 25 billion by 2014 will be achieved during the specified period.

The bilateral trade between India and Japan during the year 2009-10 was of the volume of US $ 10.36 billion. The bilateral trade during the year 2010-11 reached to US $ 13.823

Informing about the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor the Commerce Minister said, "The Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor envisages investment of US $ 100 billion and we have now decisively moved from the stage of planning and design to the stage of implementation."

On 24th October 2011, the National Manufacturing Policy was unveiled and seven industrial townships have been identified as the first National Investment and Manufacturing Zones based on models of sustainable development and smart communities, which has been perfected in Japan.

The Japanese Government is committing US $ 4.5 billion for implementation of this project.

Asking for Japanese Government to invest in infrastructure sector, Shri Sharma expressed that, "Over the next couple of decades, we will see massive expansion in Indian infrastructure.

In the coming 5 years itself, we have targeted to invest over a trillion dollars in creating capacities of infrastructure which will further catalyze India's economic growth.

India has a structured energy dialogue with Japan which seeks to promote a structured cooperation in this sector. India has made rapid strides in the renewable energy sector.

In the field of agro-processing, we aim to double our food processing capabilities in the next 5 years and the establishment of 64 fully equipped Agro Processing Zones and Food Parks provides an area of immense opportunities.

This is a segment where Japan can be an able partner to develop cross sectoral linkages in the entire value addition chain from agriculture to retail, packaging and logistics.

He observed that, India's pharmaceutical sector is acquiring a global leadership position and Indian generics today constitute nearly a fifth of global supplies.

Our pharmaceutical companies can be of immense value in providing affordable healthcare which is much needed in a country of Japan's demographic profile.

India also has a huge pool of trained pharmaceutical scientists, doctors and researchers, which opens up avenues for joint collaborative research for new drug discoveries along with joint IPRs.

PIB

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EU-India Deal Could Spell Disaster

*** Isolda Agazzi**

GENEVA, Dec 16, 2011 (IPS) - As the Eighth Ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) kicked off in Geneva this week, a group of NGOs exposed the devastating potential of a free trade agreement currently being negotiated between the European Union and India. If passed, they say the deal would make a mockery of all WTO rules and regulations.

A recent impact assessment on the right to food of the EU-India FTA, researched and compiled by leading advocacy groups including the Delhi-based Third World Network (TWN), the Indian NGO Anthra and Germany charities Misereor, Glopolis and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, concluded that the proposed deal would violate the right to food of a vast segment of the Indian population, particularly those who rely on the poultry and dairy sectors.

Additionally, the zero-tariffs clause of the free trade agreement (FTA) could lacerate the retail sector by stripping small retailers of any protection against corporate giants.

Having sat on the table since 2007, the agreement could be sealed as early as next year, an outcome that many experts see as "disastrous" for the local economy.

"The EU is asking India to cut its tariffs to zero on at least 92 percent of all imports, including industrial and agricultural goods,".

"Considering that trade with EU represents 60 percent of India's total international trade, this would be a disaster, particularly in hitherto protected sectors, like agriculture."

"Our (impact statement) focuses on the dairy and poultry sectors because they employ a large number of very small farmers, many of them operating in their backyards in order to subsist," .

Given that the dairy sector currently provides 90 millions jobs, slashing tariffs will likely result in a repeat performance of the 1999 milk crisis in India, when EU imports of skimmed milk powder rose from 600 to 25,000 tonnes, effectively destroying the country's "white revolution" for milk self-sufficiency.

Similarly, the pending FTA will flood the market with imports, depress producer prices, reduce incomes and eventually increase debt.

The poultry sector, which consists of 96 million small, landless agricultural households that manage 85 percent of the poultry stock, is currently guarded by a robust '100 percent tariff' that actually prohibits imports. But the FTA could kill these protections. Indians consume more poultry legs than breasts and vice versa in Europe.

If the EU dumped its poultry legs on the local market, India would not be able to retaliate by exporting poultry breasts to European markets because of the latter's strict health and safety standards.

Currently, the WTO advocates lowering tariffs, not removing them altogether. Additionally, the agenda for the ministerial meeting this week includes the question of industrialised countries eliminating government subsidies.

"In sharp contrast, FTAs like the one being negotiated between India and the EU insist on the complete elimination of tariffs but contain no binding clauses about eliminating subsidies,".

Experts are also concerned about the FTA's impact on the retail sector, the second largest employer in India after agriculture.

In the WTO, services trade liberalisation is a relatively flexible mechanism because it allows countries themselves to decide which sectors to open up to foreign competition.

"But FTAs make very strong demands to liberalise services in high-employment areas like retail," effectively backing the government into a corner.

Small vendors have already suffered major losses as a result of burgeoning domestic retail chains: 15 percent have seen a decline of their profits against Indian retail stores and 4.2 percent face annual closure if located near bigger retailers.

Additionally, larger retailers exercise a stranglehold over the market and then discreetly increase the prices they had originally kept low to attract consumers.

Still, Indian domestic retailers, which have already lacerated the market for small retailers, do not even hold a candle to multinational behemoths like Tesco or Carrefour, against whom small retailers in India do not stand a fighting chance.

Though India invests 51 percent of the country's capital in single-brand retail – one company selling a single, branded product – it has not yet allowed foreign direct investment, which would be "suicide" for smaller stores.

Carrefour has promised to create 1.8 millions jobs but the five NGOs who authored the study on the FTA's impact consider this figure to be unrealistic.

Furthermore, 1.8 million new jobs hardly compensates for the estimated loss of 2.9 million to a potentially staggering 6.7 million informal jobs as a direct result of the zero tariffs clause.

"This is a very sensitive issue in the country but unfortunately the public is unaware of the serious impact of the FTA because negotiations are often conducted in secret.

Contrary to the WTO, the FTA does not need to be ratified by the national parliament and state governments are not even consulted," Sengupta told IPS.

The EU-India FTA will also go much further than the WTO in the protection of intellectual property.

The EU is now pressuring India to accede to UPOV 1991 that grants seed breeding companies very strong rights at the expense of farmers, who will no longer be able to exchange, resell and use commercial seeds freely. This is a violation of their right to practise traditional forms of agriculture.

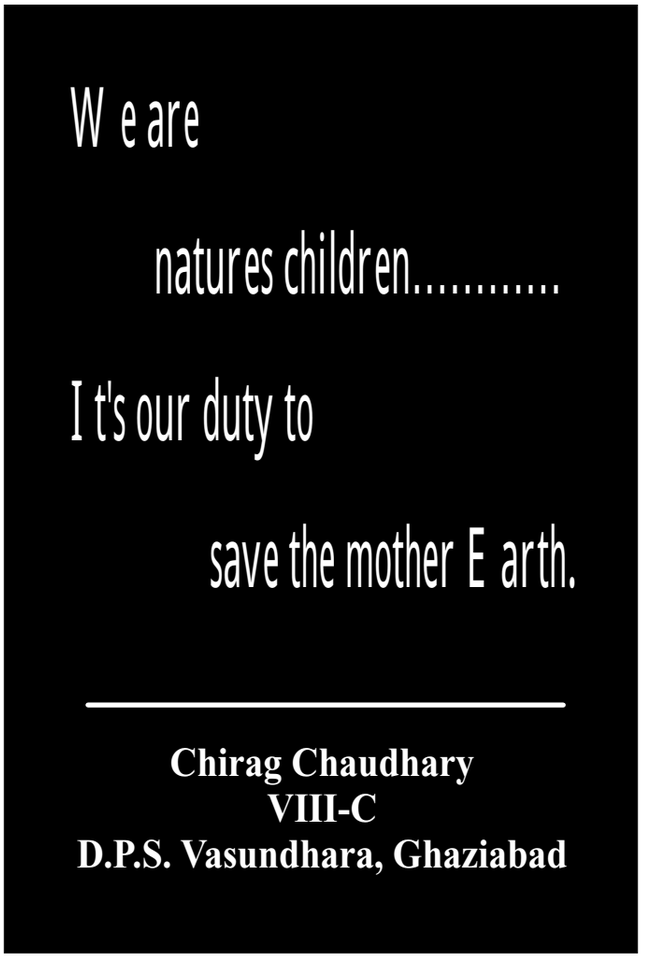
Many advocates are also concerned about the issue of "geographical indications (GIs)", a scheme that assigns certain products special status – based on their production location – and therefore a market advantage. The EU has established 190 GIs for agricultural products, which it wants India to recognise.

"But India is lagging behind in registering its own GIs, which means that EU products will get additional access to markets in India," .

Experts believe that if substantial evidence finds the FTA to have potentially adverse consequences for the Indian people, it should be reviewed and renegotiated.

"There is no point in negotiating at the WTO if these FTAs are signed simultaneously" .

http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=106238



Chirag Chaudhary
VIII-C
D.P.S. Vasundhara, Ghaziabad

Monsanto (Still) Denies Superinsect Problem, Despite Evidence

*** Tom Philpott**

Back in August-as I reported here-something strange began to happen in isolated Iowa corn fields: Otherwise healthy corn plants were falling over, their roots devastated by a ravenous insect called the corn rootworm.

At the time, the EPA-which is responsible for registering pesticide-containing crops like Monsanto's—maintained an icy silence on the matter. But last week, the agency released areport (PDF) that,



The weird part wasn't pest outbreaks in vast corn fields; farmers know that when you plant a huge amount of land with a single crop, you're also providing a friendly habitat for insects that like to eat that crop.

The odd part was that the fields were planted with seed engineered by Monsanto precisely to kill the corn rootworm. Monsanto's product-known as Bt corn-had failed; rootworms were developing resistance to it.

in calm bureaucratese, rebuked Monsanto for its "inadequate" system for monitoring.

It's one of those delectable reports written not by political appointees or higher-ups, but rather by staff scientists reporting what they see. The document offers a fascinating glimpse into the way the agency conducts business with Monsanto.

The report confirmed that resistant rootworms had risen up in four states (Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, and

Nebraska) and suspected in three others (Colorado, South Dakota, and Wisconsin). Now, everyone—Monsanto, the EPA, ag scientists—have known all along that resistance was a danger with Monsanto's rootworm-targeting Bt corn.

To avoid resistance, the EPA decreed back in 2003 that farmers using the product had to plant a "refuge" crop of non-Bt corn alongside their Bt corn, so that rootworms that had developed Bt resistance would mate with peers that had not been exposed to it, diluting the resistant trait and keeping it under control.

The question was, how large a refuge? Monsanto, hot to move as much product as possible, wanted to keep it small. In this post from early September, I laid out the whole tangled history of how back in 2003, Monsanto strong-armed the EPA into accepting a 20 percent refuge requirement, even after an independent scientific panel convened by the agency had recommended a 50 percent buffer.

In a Nature article from the time, available here, scientists involved in the panel express rage at the EPA's cave-in.

With this document, the agency is tacitly acknowledging that its independent advisory panel was right, and Monsanto was wrong. What happens now? The Center for Food Safety's Bill Freese points to research from University of Illinois crop scientist Michael Gray suggesting that in some Illinois farm counties, 40 percent of farmers lack access to high-quality non-Bt corn seed. That same problem likely affects farmers throughout the corn belt.

Just as farmers haveresponded to the collapse of Monsanto's Roundup Ready weed-killing technology by dousing their fields with "herbicide cocktails," we'll likely see farmers respond to superinsects with increased doses of toxic insecticides. Beyond that, here are the two takeaways of the EPA's recent bombshell.

The EPA has been relying on Monsanto to monitor the development of rootworm resistance, and-surprise!- Monsanto has been doing a lousy job of it.

When Monsanto hears reports from farmers and seed dealers about possible resistance outbreaks, it's supposed to investigate them.

The company's monitoring plan is "inadequate and likely to miss early resistance events," the document states. A less polite but more accurate assessment might be "inadequate and designed to miss early resistance events."

The document lists no fewer than five major problems with Monsanto's monitoring program. The agency notes that when Monsanto gets a report of possibly resistant rootworms, it collects samples of them "within 1-2 miles from neighboring sites of failed fields."

That's like a police dispatcher receiving a report of a crime in progress, and sending a cop car within one or two miles of the address. The EPA dryly notes:

Since the majority of adult corn rootworm may not disperse long distances, the greatest probability of capture of resistant genotypes should be in the problem fields, possibly in adjacent fields, but less likely in fields 2 miles away during that particular year.

The document also chides Monsanto for setting the threshold of root damage too high before an investigation is triggered, and thus missing possible early-stage resistance outbreaks that can later break out into large ones.

Perhaps most devastatingly of all, EPA reveals that Monsanto has been receiving reports of possible resistance since 2004—the year after the product's release—when it got 21 such complaints nationwide.

The number of reports ballooned to 94 in 2006 and has been hovering at around 100 per year since.

And guess what? "Monsanto reported that none of their follow-up investigations resulted…in finding resistant populations [of rootworms]."

In other words, to hear Monsanto tell it, resistance isn't a problem at all! And since Monsanto is responsible for monitoring it, the public would not know about the problem if an independent scientist, Iowa State

University entomologist Aaron Gassmann, hadn't published a paper documenting four cases of it in Iowa in August, prompting a major story in the Wall Street Journal.

Monsanto responded to Grossman's findings with brazen denial: "We don't have any demonstrated field resistance," a Monsanto official insisted to the St. Louis Post-Dispatchwhen asked about the study.

As recently as last week, in the wake of the EPA document's release, Monsanto officials continued to assert that there had been no scientific confirmation of resistance to its Bt corn, Bloomberg reported.

The response calls to mind the old Groucho Marx joke about the man pleading with his wife after being caught in flagrante with another woman: "Who are you going to believe: me, or your lying eyes?"

Monsanto's denial calls to mind the old joke about the man caught in flagrante by his wife: "Who are you going to believe: me, or your lying eyes?"

Monsanto is already peddling a solution to the problem it generated-and it, too, looks vulnerable to resistance.

Now, even though Monsanto has so far refused to acknowledge the resistance problem, the company has not shied away from promoting its new "Smartstax" corn seeds, which contain the current failing Bt toxin plus another that it has licensed from its rival, Dow, as a remedy. Bloomberg reports:

Farmers with root damage in their fields should consider changing practices to "stay ahead of this insect," Monsanto said in a statement.

That could include rotating corn with soybeans or using a product such as Monsanto's SmartStax corn, which kills rootworms with two types of Bt, the company said.

Because it contains two separate rootworm-attacking pesticides, Monsanto insists that Smartstax is less prone to cause resistance and thus needs an even smaller refuge area.

The company has persuaded the EPA to require only a 5 percent refuge for Smartstax, leaving the other 95 percent open for Monsanto's business.

But in its memo from last week, EPA scientists bluntly question the wisdom of that approach. With one of its Bt toxins having already lost effectiveness, the report notes, Smartstax will be "substantially less durable" when planted with just a 5 percent refuge, and it "could ultimately compromise the second unrelated toxin used to control the pest."

In other words, the debut of Smartstax will likely delay, but not stop, the march of Bt-resistant superinsects. But putting off problems by forever rolling out profitable new "solutions" is precisely the agrichemical industry's business model.

The question now is, will the EPA's decision makers heed this bombshell of a report and start actually subjecting Monsanto to independent oversight? Of course, as for those ravenous corn rootworms squirming around the Midwest, the solution is simple:

The Union of Concerned Scientist's Doug Gurian-Sherman has said it before and he said it again this week: Just stop growing so much damn corn.

Simple biodiversity in farm fields, it turns out, trumps the latest patented geegaw conjured up by Monsanto. And it also makes for a healthier food supply.

http://motherjones.com/tom-philpott/2011/12/superinsects-monsanto-corn-epa

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Bharatiya Krishak Samaj
New Delhi - 110091

Dr. Krishan Bir Chaudhary, President Bharatiya Krishak Samaj, participating in WTO 8th ministerial meeting in Geneva, 15 to 17 Dec. 2011











DL(E)-20/5324/2010-2012
R.N.I. No. DELENG/2009/30545



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