

Ban Terminator Campaign

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UN Upholds Moratorium on Terminator Seed Technology *Worldwide Movement of Farmers, Indigenous Peoples and Civil Society Organizations Calls for Ban*

It's official. Governments at the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have unanimously upheld the international *de facto* moratorium on Terminator technology – plants that are genetically engineered to produce sterile seeds at harvest. The 8th meeting of the CBD ended today in Curitiba, Brazil.

“The CBD has soundly rejected the efforts of Canada, Australia and New Zealand – supported by the US government and the biotechnology industry – to undermine the moratorium on suicide seeds,” said Maria Jose Guazzelli of Centro Ecológico, a Brazil-based agro-ecological organization.

“By consensus decision, all governments have re-affirmed the moratorium on a genetic engineering technology that threatens the lives and livelihoods of 1.4 billion people who depend on farmer-saved seed,” said Pat Mooney, Executive Director of ETC Group.

Over the past two weeks, the call for a ban on sterile-seed technology took center stage at the UN meeting in Brazil. Thousands of peasant farmers, including those from Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (Movimento Sem Terra) protested daily outside the UN meeting to demand a ban, and the women of the international Via Campesina movement of peasant farmers staged a powerful silent protest inside the meeting on 23 March.

“Terminator seeds are genocide seeds,” said Francisca Rodríguez from Via Campesina, “We have pride in being one more step forward in our struggle but we will not stop until Terminator is banned from the face of the earth.”

The CBD's moratorium on Terminator, adopted six years ago, was under attack by three governments – Australia, Canada and New Zealand – that insisted on a “case-by-case risk assessment” of the technology. A broad coalition of farmers, social movements, Indigenous peoples and civil society organizations pressed governments meeting in Brazil to reject the controversial text because it threatened to open the door to national-level field testing of Terminator, without regard for its devastating social impacts.

On 23 March, Malaysia, speaking on behalf of the G77 and China (together a group of 130 developing nations), said that the reference to case-by-case risk assessment was “clearly unacceptable” because it would potentially allow field tests. Today the CBD re-affirmed the moratorium on Terminator and even strengthened it by making it clear that any future research would only be conducted within the bounds of the moratorium – meaning no field trials.

Leading up to the UN meeting, civil society groups and social movements across the globe intensified their campaigns against Terminator – sending a strong message to governments meeting in Brazil. Actions include:

- In India, farmers collected over a half million signatures calling on the Prime Minister to remain strong in defending the national ban on Terminator and upholding the international moratorium;
- On 16 March, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on European governments to uphold the CBD moratorium and reject text on “case by case;”
- On March 23, following extensive consultations, Indigenous community leaders in Peru called on multinational company Syngenta to abandon its Terminator-like patent on potatoes;
- In Madrid on March 23, anti-Terminator protesters planted local varieties of organic vegetable seeds outside Monsanto’s offices;
- Last week groups targeted those countries supporting Terminator and, in addition to domestic letter-writing campaigns, protests were held at the New Zealand embassies in London and New Delhi, and a protest was held at the Canadian embassy in Berlin.

“The international moratorium on Terminator has been upheld – but the battle isn’t over yet. Terminator will be commercialized unless national governments take action to ban it – as Brazil and India have done,” said Lucy Sharratt of the international Ban Terminator Campaign.

5000 peasant farmers protested today outside the UN conference to send government delegates home with their message to protect Farmers’ Rights.

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