

Haitian Farmers Say “Burn Monsanto’s Seeds”

Canadian groups support Haitian rejection of Monsanto’s seed donation

For Immediate Release

Thursday, June 3, 2010 - Today farmer and environmental groups from across Canada stated their support for tomorrow’s farmer march in Haiti, organized to protest a donation of 475 tons of hybrid corn and vegetable seeds from the U.S.-based multinational biotechnology corporation Monsanto. The seeds will be distributed by the U.S. government aid agency to Haiti’s farmers.

Tomorrow, Friday June 4, in Montreal, representatives from groups including Union Paysanne, Action SOS Haiti, the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, HAITI: One Seed One Country, and Greenpeace will hold a symbolic solidarity action outside the Haitian Consulate and deliver a letter in support of the farmers.

Chavannes Jean-Baptist of the Peasant Movement of Papay (MPP) in Haiti called Monsanto’s donation “a new earthquake.” MPP organized the protest march for tomorrow and has called on all of Haiti’s farmers to burn Monsanto’s seeds. “If people start sending us hybrid seeds that’s the end of Haitian agriculture,” said Chavannes.

So far, Monsanto has said that the donated corn seeds are not genetically modified but are hybrids, which means that they may not be suitable for replanting in the subsequent seasons. By cultivating Monsanto’s corn, Haitian peasant farmers will be forced to make annual purchases of seeds.

After the earthquake, much of Haiti’s rural seed stocks were used to help feed people who fled to rural areas from devastated towns and cities. In a message to Haitian farmers, Chavannes stated, “Monsanto is taking advantage of the earthquake...to open the country’s doors to this powerful company. We cannot accept this.”

“With friends like Monsanto and its governmental allies, who needs enemies,” said Benoit Griouard of Union Paysanne, “This so-called donation is an attack on Haitian farmers and the future of their local seeds.”

“Haiti’s farmers are telling us that the future of Haiti depends on local production with local seeds and local knowledge, for local consumption,” said Colleen Ross of the National Farmers Union, “This is called food sovereignty and we support Haiti’s farmers in their struggle.”

“Our people will never be autonomous if Haiti has to suffer through what is called generosity but makes us dependent on corporate control in agricultural production,” said Catherine Thélémaque of Action SOS Haiti in Montreal, “We are already working with Haitian farmers on sustainable, environmental and fair projects,”

“Food sovereignty cannot be attained with hybrid or genetically modified seeds” said Sebastien Roux, Coordinator of the Quebec group HAITI: One Seed One Country which has already sent more than \$15,000 worth of organic and open-pollinated seeds to Haiti. “We strongly denounce this shipment of seeds from Monsanto which will jeopardize the future of Haitian agriculture.”

Canadians are responding to a call for international solidarity from Haiti’s peasant movement which is asking all people to “Struggle against Monsanto and its accomplices.”

“Haitian farmers are building their own, locally-relevant ecological farming solutions and are resisting dependence on the false solutions promoted by multinationals like Monsanto,” said Eric Darier, Agriculture campaigner for Greenpeace Canada.

“Monsanto’s corporate give-away of seeds will secure a future for Monsanto, not for Haiti’s farmers,” said Lucy Sharratt, Coordinator of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network.

The solidarity action in Montreal will be front of the Haitian Consulate: 1100 René-Lévesque West, Friday 4th June 10h00.

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