

# GMO-Free Europe 2010

6th European Conference of GMO-Free Regions  
Brussels and Ghent, 16.-18. September 2010



# Workshops & Presentations

## **Connections Café – adding a special flavor!**

We hope you will agree that the programme for our meeting in Ghent on Friday and Saturday provides a varied and exciting choice of workshops and presentations from some of the best-informed speakers and activists in these fields.

***However, we believe that everyone who attends this event is an expert in their own field and has something special to share.*** So we want to create a space where *YOU* can also contribute to the programme. That's the idea behind our 'Connections Café' – an informal space where all conference participants can connect with others to share information, solve problems or create something entirely new!

**How will it work?** A big blackboard with time slots on it will be provided where participants can schedule their suggestions for the parallel agenda, or browse what is on offer and sign up to join a proposed session. Of course, you can also use the café as a space to relax, meet others informally or just take a break. It is definitely worth dropping in – you can't tell who you might meet!

## **Friday 15:00 - 17:00 h**

### **Let's liberate diversity! Seeds are Common Goods not Commodities**

Since thousands of years, people all over the world create livestock and crop diversity. This biologic and cultural diversity is a fundamental part of the human right to food. It must remain a common good, belonging to everyone. Today, ten companies already control 67% of the international commercial seed market and demand that their intellectual property rights be expanded in order to increase their profits and to impose industrial varieties throughout the world. Open pollinating varieties that can be shared and re-sown are systematically displaced from the market. European laws seek to relegate these heirloom and regional varieties to a small and highly controlled niche.

**Facilitators:** Heike Schiebeck and Andreas Riekeberg

**Presentations:** 35 min documentary with seed-activists

### **Farmers research and innovation**

Farmers innovation is the basis of regional development and value creation. Best results come from combining local and traditional knowledge with new research and technologies in a bottom up integrated process rather than from top down individual applications of readymade technologies and product packages created and tailored in labs and universities. Examples of how to create circular flow and regional humus economies will be presented providing high and reliable return, healthy livestock and improve regional value added, based on natural models.

**Facilitators:** Christoph Fischer and Haiko Pieplow

**Presentations:** Haiko Pieplow - Experiences of the global network of Zero Emissions Research Initiatives (ZERI), sustainable solutions and economic models  
Christoph Fischer - Experiences of a regional farmers innovation community in Rosenheim, Bavaria

### **State of environmental risk assessment, science and regulations and EFSA**

We will discuss current situation concerning risks of certain crops, such as herbicide tolerant soy and Bt plants. Further we will introduce basic questions concerning risk assessment within the

European Union and the guidelines of EFSA. There will be a special contribution on round up ready soy.

**Facilitator:** Christoph Then

## **Patents on Life**

DNA sequences, plants and animals are submitted to European and US patent offices in large numbers as private property of multinationals. However, the political discussion and mobilization in Europe as well as some recent court decisions offer some hope, that patents on life are no longer accepted by governments and courts. The workshop will present recent developments and the state of European mobilisation and discuss the next steps against the "Monsantisation" of the world.

**Facilitators:** Ruth Tippe et al.

## **The policies of knowledge based bioeconomy**

The Knowledge Based Bio-Economy (KBBE) has become new concept in the political arena, especially with respect to the European research agenda. This interactive workshop will explore whether the KBBE is really something new compared to the old promises of biotechnology. Current political dynamics behind the KBBE and R&D investment decisions will also be explored. Workshop participants will then be invited to discuss how civil society organisations would like to meet the need for food, feed, fibres, chemicals, materials and energy in the coming decades and the strategies to accomplish that. The workshop will thus aim at developing strategies to change current processes of decision-making about R&D investments and make decisions more accountable.

**Facilitators:** Helen Wallace and Piet Schenkelaars

## **Friday 17:15 - 18:00 h**

### **Synthetic Biology and artificial life**

Synthetic Biology is one of the new hypes. Its promises go from 'synthi-fuels' - a second generation of 'clean' biofuels - to new pharmaceuticals and much more. What is Synthetic Biology? Is it really about creating new life-forms? Who are the main players and what is their game? (For very short intro click on the picture)

**Facilitators and Presenters:** Florianne Koechlin and Christoph Then

### **How to declare a GMO free region?**

This session aims at presenting the experience of specific GMO-free regions including the grounds and arguments they have used to declare themselves GM free, the stakeholders involved and problems they have faced. A strategic discussion about the possibility to declare a GMO-free region in the light of the new EU co-existence guidelines will take place on Saturday in the workshop "The Role of GMO-free Regions under the New EU Co-existence Guidelines".

**Facilitators:** Charlotte Berthou

### **Clone Food and other novel food aspects**

A recent **scandal** about milk and meat from cloned cows' offspring sold in the UK has highlighted that products from cloned animals entering the food chain is no longer science fiction. Supermarkets vowed to never sell meat or milk from cloned animals. Reviewing the EU Novel Food Regulation, the European Parliament has called for a ban on sales of products from cloned animals and their descendants. It has also called for a moratorium on nanotechnology in food. This

workshop presents an overview on legislative as well as market developments.

**Facilitator and Presenter:** Corinna Zerger

## **BASF & Co**

GM critics are faced with huge transnational corporations. This can be depressing at times, but at the same time provides an ideal projection screen. Two or three corporations (BASF, KWS, probably Monsanto) will be introduced and experiences of disputes with them will be shared with a view to joint perspectives.

**Facilitator:** Christof Potthof

## **Modifying life - paradigms and perspectives**

This presentation starts from François Meyer's theory on the effects of tool-making on human evolution. Comparing different graphics on the evolution of the world population, driving power sources, tool efficiency and other indicators, it argues against the illusion of exponential growth of technological development. *"Whoever thinks that exponential growth is possible in a finite world is either a fool or an economist"*, Kenneth Boulding once put it. We may have to add *"...or a biologist"*. Current evaluation processes, especially concerning GMOs, have not properly adjusted to fundamentally new challenges. They are derived from outdated scientific paradigms which do not take into account that modern technologies are now directly interfering with the objects they observe. A new paradigm is needed - urgently.

**Facilitator and Presenter:** Frédéric Jacquemart

## **A new tool: The European Citizens Initiative**

The treaty of Lisbon has introduced a new instrument for European Citizens to directly introduce suggestions for legislation. The EU Commission has now proposed detailed rules how to implement this European Citizens Initiative, which will require a minimum of 1 million signatures in at least one third of the member states. Could this new tool be useful for the large majority of European Citizens who don't want GMOs in their fields and on their plates?

**Facilitators:** Steve Emmott

## **Grassroots experiences**

Short presentations of exiting experiences and initiatives: From a nation wide picknick in Poland against GMOs to a EU wide grassroots movement "Reclaim the fields". They may lead to further in depth discussions at Saturday afternoon and could serve as inspiration for action and change. Additional contributions are welcome!

**Facilitator:** Antje Kölling

## **Health impacts of Roundup**

Reports about birth defects in areas which are constantly sprayed with Monsanto's Roundup have been reported since some time especially in Argentina. Prof. Andrés Carrasco, a leading embryologist at the University of Buenos Aires, has conducted a series of standard embryonic tests with the herbicides active ingredient Glyphosate. The results, which have recently been published in "Research in Toxicology" of the American Chemical Society, are alarming. They have triggered legal action and an official investigation ordered by the government, but also threats to Prof. Carrasco and violent attacks against the public discussion of these findings. Prof. Carrasco will present the findings and report about the circumstances.

**Presenter:** Prof. Andrés E. Carrasco

## **Friday 18:15 - 19:00 h**

### **GM livestock and aquatic species**

The United States Food and Drug Administration is currently in its final stage of reviewing AquaBounty's application for marketing genetically engineered salmon. What is the status of genetically modified livestock and aquaculture species research and legislation?

**Facilitator:** Susanne Gura

### **Animal feed: GMO-free supply, alternatives and the zero tolerance dispute**

GM soybean and maize imports constitute the majority of GMOs consumed in Europe. Millions of tons still enter the European Union every year. There are alternatives: Non-GM soybeans are available as well as alternative strategies to provide proteins to animals. A recent dispute about "zero tolerance" for GMOs that are not approved within the EU but may appear in bulk shipments of animal feed may lead to changes of existing legislation. Is this really necessary?

**Facilitator:** Jochen Koester and Heike Moldenhauer

### **Costs of coexistence**

Even though no cultivation of GMOs has occurred in nearly all EU countries non GMO farmers, producers and processors already have cope with substantial costs to prevent the presence of GMOs in their products. In Spain the cultivation of GM maize had already massive impacts on organic and other non-GM farmers. Several studies have revealed the present costs, especially for food processors and estimate future costs for the gm free sector. The "polluter pays" principle so far has been reverted: Those who are contaminated or have to prevent such contamination are the ones who have to bear the costs.

**Facilitators:** Antje Kölling

**Presentations:** Christoph Then, Matthias Stolze

### **New breeding technologies - hidden GMOs?**

More and more seed companies invest in genetic technologies different from genetic engineering for their seed production which are not covered by present EU regulations on GMOs. Such technologies (directed mutagenesis, oligonucleotides, zinc fingers etc.) pose the same problems with respect to health and environment and are covered by patents. The EU Commissions Directorate General on Health and Consumers (after the DG environment) has established a working group to evaluate these technologies and is hesitant to present its conclusions. What are the challenges in the debate about these new technologies?

**Facilitator:** Guy Kastler

### **National bans on GM crops**

This session will present the success stories of MON810 and "Amflora" bans in few European countries. Representatives from national governments and NGOs will report on the grounds that have been used for the bans, the elaboration of the legal backing and will map the factors that played a crucial role for their implementation. Additionally to that the Hungarian prosecution on "Amflora" against the European Commission will be presented.

**Facilitators:** Stanka Becheva

**Presentations:** Hungary, France, Germany

## **How the Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS) tries to sell GM soy as 'responsible'**

The Round Table on Responsible Soy has been working since 2005 to develop a scheme that will certify mainstream GM soy as 'responsible'. Industry members supporting RTRS include Cargill, ADM, Monsanto and Syngenta. NGO members include WWF and Solidaridad from the EU, and very few NGOs from Latin America. On the contrary, there has been consistent criticism from social, environmental and farmers organisations and movements both in Latin America and Europe of this new certification system, not only because it aims to label GM soy as 'responsible,' but also because it fails to achieve the primary objective that it set out to achieve, halting deforestation (in particular the Amazon). This 'responsible soy' is planned to be on the European market as of 2011. This workshop will explain in depth the limitations and fundamental problems with the RTRS and report experiences from Belgium and the Netherlands.

**Facilitator:** Nina Holland

**Presentations:** Nina Holland - RoundupReady crops 'responsible'? The threat of new voluntary certification schemes

John Fagan - scientific background

## **How to lobby at the EU level?**

Influencing decisions of the European Union's institutions is not and should not be a privilege of companies and organisations big enough to hire lobby experts or entertain an office in Brussels. This workshop for "beginners" presents experiences and basic rules how to have your say in Brussels and also shows how EU decisions are actually molded at the level of national governments.

**Facilitators:** Corinna Zerger, Marco Contiero, et al.

## **CBD and Biosafety Protocol in Japan**

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety within the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the most important global agreement on minimum standards for information, labeling and risk assessment of GMOs. At the upcoming meeting of the Parties to the Protocol a new effort will be made to establish minimum standards for global liability and redress for damage arising from GMOs. Transnational companies have been fighting hard against any liability. Will the 140 member states to the Protocol manage to achieve an agreement this time. One of the principal negotiators on behalf of NGOs will present the state of discussion and advise on last minute lobby efforts towards your governments.

**Facilitator and presenter:** Christine von Weizsäcker

## **GM rice - a new threat to the human food chain?**

Countless illegal plantings of GM rice in China; hundreds of pending legal rice cases in the US after the largest GM contamination event ever; more than 200 contamination cases of rice shipments entering the EU... and one request for Bayer's GM rice nearing approval in the EU level that could open the floodgates to so much more. Since no GM rice is grown commercially in the world at the moment, the wrong EU move will trigger worldwide consequences. This workshop will focus on two main issues: Where exactly do we stand on GM rice in the world and Europe? And what can be done to keep one of the most important staple crops in the world free of GMOs?

**Presentation:** Johan Diels

**Facilitator:** Lanka Horstink

## **Saturday 10:30 - 13:00 h**

### **GM seed contamination - the big battle ahead**

A pending proposal to allow for unlabeled "adventitious and technically unavoidable" contamination of seed with genetically modified varieties could be the ultimate attack on any attempts to keep agriculture gm-free. Thresholds in the range of 0,3% (or 300 gm-maize plants per hectare) would force farmers to grow GMOs against their will. This eight year old project of the seed industry will most likely be proposed by the Commission again. We must get ready to launch an EU wide campaign to protect the purity of seed once more.

**Facilitators:** Benny Haerlin, Christoph Then, Antje Kölling, Siegrid Herbst

### **The CAP reform, lessons from the IAASTD , opportunities 2011**

The pending reform of the European Unions Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is probably the single most important piece of legislation governing the future shape of agriculture not only in Europe but also with respect to the Unions partners world wide. There are plenty of direct and indirect impacts of the CAP reform on the future of GMOs in European agriculture. For the first time this legislative act, which will direct the biggest part of the EU budget, can no longer be agreed between agricultural ministers alone but must be approved by the European Parliament. This is a great opportunity to influence the decisions and also make the public understand that the CAP is not just about farm subsidies but actually about the future of our food, our regions, our environment. A European NGO network has started facilitating concerted efforts of NGOs.

**Facilitators:** Hannes Lorenzen

### **The Role of GMO-free Regions under the New EU "coexistence" Guidelines**

This workshop picks up the inputs given by the presentation "How to Declare a GMO-free Region?", discusses the opportunities to get the best of co-existence laws and challenge the new EU co-existence guidelines, make participants think about further steps in the development of regional co-operations and come up with suggestions for how to reinforce the GM-free regions in the next years.

**Facilitator:** Stanka Becheva

**Presentations:** GM free regional government representatives, Thiejs Etty

### **How to use the changes in the new EU legislation to achieve a GM-free Europe?**

This workshop will analyse the European Commission proposal to give Member States the right to ban GM cultivation in their country. Its goal is to highlight the positive and detrimental impacts of the proposal, analyse the potential of socio-economic reasons in the debate of a GM-free food and farming sector to constraint and stop the cultivation , align the GMO-free regions movement on a common position, outline a general strategic plan and specify future projects/activities that could unify anti-GMO organisations.

**Facilitators:** Marco Contiero, Mute Schimpf

## **Building a European anti GMO action network - Preparing for commercial and experimental planting 2011**

All over Europe grass roots action groups are fighting the presence of GMOs in agriculture and food chain. Some groups target fields, others retail or politics. Though there is a European grass roots movement, an EU-wide activist network for exchange and cooperation has not yet emerged. With this workshop we want to contribute to resolving that gap as well as linking the NGO lobby in Brussels with grass roots action groups. Participants are welcome to this round table workshop with contributions from their local experience, as well as suggestions for movement building tools and activities. Workshop starts with a round about expected plantings in 2011.

**Facilitators:** Christof Potthof, Linda Coenen, Gerald Miles and Charlotte Berthou

## **Saturday 17:30 - 20:00 h**

In addition to the events presented here this time is reserved for new and emerging issues and spontaneous gatherings. Please let us know about any plans to this end.

### **Scientists under attack**

#### **Genetic engineering in the magnetic field of money - A political Thriller on GMOs and freedom of speech**

Árpád Pusztai and Ignacio Chapela have two things in common. They are distinguished scientists and their careers are in ruins. Both scientists choose to look at the phenomenon of genetic engineering. Both made important discoveries. Both of them are suffering the fate of those who criticise the powerful vested interests that now dominate big business and scientific research. Statements made by scientists themselves prove that 95% of the research in the area of genetic engineering is paid by the industry. Only 5% of the research is independent. The big danger for freedom of science and our democracy is evident. Can the public we all still trust our scientists?

**Facilitator:** Bertram Verhaag

### **Farmer to Farmer: GM Crops in the USA**

This 60 minute film has been made by Michael Hart a family farmer from the UK to show the practical experiences of American farmers growing GM crops. In a three week tour of nine US states Michael met many farmers growing GM crops, and some who did not, he asks them: have they lived up to the promises made on their introduction, have they meant less herbicide and pesticide use, has there been better weed control, better yields, have lower growing costs meant more profit, and would they recommend other farmers to grow them?

He also met soil scientists, farm advisers and others and asks them about their thoughts and experiences on these crops. This film shows his trip and interviews with many of those he met. Due to the time available, Michael will talk about his trip and experiences using short clips from the film and copies of the film will be available. A website is also being built which will show more of the interviews than the 60 minutes of the film allows.

**Facilitator:** Michael Hart

### **Women from Planet Diversity**

A 45 minute documentation of the 2008 Planet Diversity demonstration, festival and conference on food, agriculture, biological and cultural diversity.

Condensed from 20 hours of videotaped interviews and more, "Women from Planet Diversity" presents the sights, sounds and expertise from some of those who made Planet Diversity possible. We hear from students, environmental activists, farmers and well-known experts Vandana Shiva (India) and Farida Akhter (Bangladesh). The issues raised then remain urgent and relevant today, as we near the 2010 Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya.