

## **Declaration of No to GMOs Platform:**

# **Life cannot be patented**

A ghost threatening our dining tables, our health and our future has been around for a long time now. The name of this threat caused by multinational companies and greedy investors is: Genetically Modified Organisms, shortly GMO. In the international literature it is usually referred to as GM or GMO. All the genetically modified organisms are included in this framework. The definition of GMO in this paper is: “Any living organism having a new genetic material combination which is created by using modern biotechnology”.

### **Biological “richness”**

One of the main concerns about GMO is the fact that, by spreading through the natural vegetal species, the modified genes destroy the genetic diversity in their natural habitat, cause a deviation in the natural structures of wild species and violate the distribution and balances in the ecosystem.

This is one of the most important issues that should be taken into consideration in Turkey. Turkey is a very rich country in biological diversity especially when compared to Europe. 2 thousand out of our 11 thousand vegetal species are endemic ones that exist nowhere else. Just like the underground resources or historical remains, the vegetal and animal species in a country are among the most important sources of that country. According to ecologist Barry Commoner, if the ecological systems are left under too much pressure, there may be sudden and shocking disasters. It is out of doubt that GMO, which contain many foreign substances such as chemical drugs and animal genes, can cause such disasters. Commoner says: “ecological system is an amplifier. A tiny turbulence somewhere may have bigger and delayed effects somewhere else.” The species, which are used in modern agriculture and are genetic copies of one another, are raised as prototypes in vast areas. This method, which is known as monoculture, brings several economical advantages but in nature, every benefit has a payback time. For example, the prototype units in the monoculture are affected equally from a disease, which can spread really fast and destroy all the products.

As the monoculture method is used more frequently, the nutrition and taste that we receive from foods also become prototypes. The species, which already decrease in number due to the effects of modern agricultural methods, become threatened by GMO. Because the modified genes of GMOs may disperse to the traditionally raised products. The GMO pollens may be carried to the traditionally produced corps of the neighboring fields by winds and bees. So the other corps become resistant to the pesticides and herbicides that exist in genetically modified corps. As a result of the environmental damages of Frankenstein Foods –the name given by Anti-GMOs to GMO products- such as clovers that carry the genes of the cholera bacteria, potatoes that carry chicken genes, cotton that carry scorpion genes and tomatoes that carry fish genes, new Frankenstein’s are born.

### **How do GMO products affect our health?**

One of the main disadvantages of the GMO products is their negative effect to the human health. According to the experts the health risks are as follows: resistance against antibiotics, toxic or allergic effects in humans and animals when used as food, possibility of increasing the infectivity of the microorganisms in human and animal body when taken directly. Everyday, new scientific researches are made which verify the health risks of GMO products. For example, transgenic soya bean, which carries a gene of Brazilian nut, causes allergic reactions in people who are allergic to nuts. Latest experiments carried out by Arpad Pusztaria who works in Rowett Institute, uncovered new doubts about GMOs. In this research it has been found out that the genetically modified potatoes are toxic to mice and they have several effects such as disorders in the immunity system and viral infections. Mice, which were fed with non-GM potatoes, were healthy. Later on, the experiments revealed that toxicity was a result of the gene transfer method.

Another experiment showed that the DNA we receive through food may be transported to our cells. Until very recently, it has been thought that DNA could be digested in our intestines. However the experiments proved just the opposite. In the intestines of the mice, which were fed, with the DNAs of a bacterial virus, large particles of virus DNA were found which could live along the inner intestine and could pass to the blood. The DNAs were also seen in the leucocytes, in the liver and spleen cells, and it has been proven that the virus DNA settled to the mice's genome. It has also been found out that the virus DNA that was fed to the pregnant mice, passed to the cells of the embryo and the newborn babies.

### **Do GMO really increase productivity?**

Is it possible to have an increase in the agricultural production thanks to GMO? As it is strictly mentioned by every scientist who work in the fields of ecology or natural sciences: in nature, there is no benefit without payback! The paybacks of the revenues received through the increase in agricultural production are environmental pollution, global warming, species in extinction and many other environmental problems. It is really difficult to give exact statistics, as the GMO agriculture is a new method. However, the rules are valid in this field as well. It is possible to have an increase in productivity for a while by using this method, however, it is impossible to keep this increase permanent. Of course we must not forget the payback we are due.

The productivity received from the GMO products is lower than those of traditional agriculture. This is a phenomenon denying the discourses of the companies, which bought the patents of this sector. The productivity of GMO products is lower than the traditional agriculture and furthermore, the seeds are more expensive and the care products are equally expensive.

### **Can genetically modified organisms overcome hunger?**

One of the main points defended by those who are for using GMO is that, GMO are necessary to meet the ever-increasing food demand of the world and to find a solution for the hunger problem.

Most of the ecologists think that the hunger problem of the third world countries is not a result of lack of production potential but of unplanned use and unbalanced distribution of the production capacity. The experts believe that the existing agricultural capacity is

enough to meet the needs of the world population. According to the report of United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, dated 1990, the increase in the production of grains is 50% more than the increase in population. Of course these statistics do not mean that there is no hunger problem in the world. But the problem is not because of production, but of uneven distribution.

If we have a look at the countries that are facing hunger problems, we see that almost all of these countries are ex-colonies of the Western countries. Their agricultural economies are established to feed other countries' benefits. Even after becoming independent, most of these countries have implemented agricultural policies that depend on exportation because they were dealing with economical problems such as foreign debts. That means; instead of producing food to feed their people, they tried to produce export products that will bring foreign money. In many countries where people suffer from hunger problems, the fields, which were used to produce food for the people, are now filled with export products that can be sold to developed countries such as coffee, cotton, bananas, cacao, etc. For example in Ethiopia, even when hunger was at serious levels, coffee production and exportation still continued.

On the other hand, this issue has another dimension: waste and consumption craze. According to the statistics of the USA Department of Agriculture, the USA citizens waste more than 25% of the food products each year. The research show that, in 1995 only, the amount of food that were thrown away was about 43 millions of tones. If we assume that a person consumes 1.5 kg of food everyday, only 5% of the wasted food is enough to feed 4 millions of people. The process named "green revolution" when modern technologies, chemical drugs and hormones started to be used in agriculture was introduced to public as a solution for world hunger. However the statistics prove just the opposite. According to the World Development Statistics report of the World Bank, which was published in 1993, the average income of an individual in a low-income country was about 2.4% of that of high-income countries in 1976. In 1982, this rate dropped to 2.3%, in 1988, 1.9%. From 1980 to 1990, the growth in GNP of the low and middle-income countries was 52% of the high-income countries.

It is obvious that we do not need GMO to meet the increasing food demand or to bring food to the places suffering from hunger. The reason of hunger is not the lack of food but the uneven distribution of food and unplanned agricultural policies. We cannot talk about goodwill when GMO producing companies try to enter the agriculture of the third world countries that are already dealing with problems in their agricultural policies.

### **What is the intention of GMO producing companies?**

According to the statistics given by ecologist Pimentel, 32% of the total amount of energy used for an agriculture field, is used for the production of nitrogen fertilizer, 28% for the fuel used by agricultural machines, 15% for the production and maintenance of these machines, 11% for the power expenses, 4% for drying the product. Other expenses are: 2% for transport, distribution, potassium fertilizer, phosphor fertilizer and seeds. Those less than 2% are for: herbicides, pesticides, irrigation and manpower. As it can be seen clearly, the rate of manpower in industrialized agriculture is very less.

When we examine the situation carefully, we can see that the abovementioned issue is not traditional farming, but agriculture industry. The key point is here. To be able to

reach the end product on its field, the farmer depends on industrial organizations that make production in this field. It is not difficult to guess that some of these companies are multinational.

All around the world, 8 or 10 companies dominate the seed market of genetically modified agriculture and feed products. The main target of these companies is to shape the agriculture and elevation sectors of all of the countries so that they buy seeds from these companies.

### **Patent implementations on GMO**

GMOs are a way of dominating the sector. Patent rights are the most important means to reach this dominance. Today, GMOs are within the area of both product and technical patent rights. Genetically modified products are patented. Because the main income means of these companies are collecting the patent fees. For example, you may protect even the microorganism only with the patent rights and there are big protection institutions in this field. However, this microorganism has been living in nature for thousands of years and you want the protection right and a monopoly right just because you isolate it from its natural environment, you display and prove its certain characteristics. And you receive this right.

Because it is very difficult to find and define the genes and it requires big investments (according to the European Patent Agreement), one can make an application and receive a patent on condition that he shows the functions of this gene –ex: which protein he coded and what are its functions. However, patents are for protecting the new inventions, which are applicable in industry. In genetic changes, only the technique used should be patented. All the other patents given for the genes that already exist in nature are not legal. This is biological crime. If the farmer reuses the excess seeds of genetically modified cotton, corn or tobacco, he has to repay a fee to the patent owner. One of the oldest and most fundamental methods, sparing seeds from your own corps for the following year is therefore totally removed.

Patent rights of the sources of the third world countries with rich gene resources, are collected by a few developed countries, and multicultural companies.

In the west, as a result of the struggle of the environmentalist movements, plantation and import of GMO products face with serious obstacles. When compared to EU legislation, there is no legal development in Turkey about the production, export and import of these products. Everything goes on secretly. Neither the consumer, nor the producer is informed about this subject. However, it is very obvious that GMOs are harmful for the natural diversity and human health.

Liberalization of trade will be inescapable after EU membership. That means, tradable biotechnological products will be able to enter Turkey. For example, when we start to import and produce transgenic wheat products in Turkey, which is the motherland of wheat, we will pose a great threat to our own genetic sources.

As individuals who see ecological life as a whole starting from its production stage to the sociological level, and who adopt it as an alternative lifestyle preventing the world from taking bad routes, we demand:

- 1) We refuse the GMO products whose future impacts on ecology and humanity are still unclear, and which may disturb the ecosystem with resulting health problems. We demand that entrance of these products into Turkey should be prevented.
- 2) Agriculture on GMO is a mass destructive technique, which destroys all the other forms of agriculture, especially ecological agriculture. Therefore, entrance of GMO containing seeds to our country should be banned and agriculture on GMO should not be permitted. Agricultural production should respect the cycles and rhythms of the nature.
- 3) Foods containing GMO are a real threat to the right of traditional and local alimentation culture. Eventually when these products are imported to the country, we demand that they should be identified with “etiquettes” which explain their “ingredients”. We think that it is the fundamental right of the consumers to know which products contain GMO and to make their own choice.
- 4) We demand that the products of the companies which are known as using GMO, such as Nestle and the imported products of GMO producing companies such as Cargill, Novartis, Zeneca, Du-Pont, Syngenta, Monsanto ve Dow Chemical should be strictly controlled.
- 5) Relevant institutions of the Ministry of Health should control the GMO products, as 98% of them contain pesticides.
- 6) The groups such as farmer associations and agriculture chambers should consult to memorandums under the frame of struggle against the GMO products. This is the only way to create protected zones excluding all GMO intrusion, against a possible future GMO danger.
- 7) Especially environmentalist and ecologist organizations, NGOs, agriculture chambers, and consumer protection organizations should participate to the National Committee of Biosecurity.
- 8) The memorandums and opposition manifestations against the use of GMO seeds should not be limited to the ecologically fragile zones.
- 9) Agriculture products and seeds containing GMO are cheaper than traditional products in Turkey. These prices can easily deceive the Turkish farmers and elevators economically. It is the duty of the state and the NGOs to ensure that public institutions, particularly at regional and local levels, should provide necessary information for the farmers and elevators.
- 10) National Biosecurity Coordination Committee’s works will be terminated in March 2004. However, the project will most probably be prolonged. It has been estimated that it will take 4-5 years for the draft regulation, which is prepared according to these project, to be discussed by the relevant ministries (Agriculture, Forestry-Environment, Health, etc) and be offered to the Grand National Assembly to be put into force as a law. It is an

urgent issue and this law has to be put into force as soon as possible. According to the obligation for each country to adopt their own control measures against the GMO products, the interdictions defined by the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> articles of the Regulation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, should stay valid and no regulation against these provisions should be made.

11) The Turkish Food Codex should define the GDO products and these products should be banned because of their harmful effects on human health.

12) The inventions, which will threaten human health, public order, environmental equilibrium, ecosystem, and biological diversity, should not be patented and the existing patents should be annulled.

13) Our current law, codes and regulations our customs services and analyze laboratories are not ready yet for GMO products and seeds. It is necessary that these preparations be made as soon as possible.

14) The genetic resources of Turkey are one of our richest sources. The state and NGOs should institute official measures for the protection and durability of this resource and put into force laws to ensure such protection against the threat of multinational companies.

NOTE: This text is a summary of the Declaration of Genetically Modified Organisms published by GDO'ya Hayır Platformu (Platform of 'No to GMOs'). The original text is available in <http://www.geocities.com/nisanbir/GDO.html> and <http://www.gdoyahayir.org>

## MESSAGE D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

### AUX MÉDIAS DE LA PRESSE, À TOUS NOS INVITÉS,

#### DÉCLARATION CONTRE LES OGM

Nous avons réuni près d'une trentaine d'organismes de concertation civile pour former une plateforme sur les organismes génétiquement modifiée (OGM) que nous considérons comme une des grandes menaces du 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle.

Au mois de février dernier, suite à un travail de préparation intense, la plateforme « Non aux OGM! » a produit une déclaration intitulée « La vie ne se brevete pas! » qui a ensuite été envoyée aux ONG affiliées. Les représentants des ONG participantes se sont joint à la plateforme pour une première réunion au mois de mars, suite à laquelle nous avons organisé des réunions régionales à Ankara et à Istanbul, respectivement à la fin du mois d'avril et à la mi-mai. Les participants de la plateforme ont lancé une pétition conjointe à l'échelle nationale. Par ailleurs, divers activités et panels ont été organisés pour permettre la discussion et le débat.

#### POURQUOI SOMMES-NOUS CONTRE?

Pour la première fois dans l'histoire de l'humanité, on enregistre des droits de propriété intellectuelle sur des êtres vivants. Dès qu'une compagnie de biotechnologie découvre chez un organisme un gène lié à une fonction spécifique elle en fait faire le brevet. Or le principe du brevet s'applique uniquement aux découvertes innovatrices. Nous pensons que c'est la technique d'association d'une fonction à un gène qui peut être brevetée, et non le gène ou l'organisme lui-même. Aucun individu, aucune compagnie, ne peut s'approprier des droits sur la nature d'organismes vivants, capables de reproduction et présents dans la nature depuis des millions d'années. C'est de la criminalité biologique.

Alors que les pays développés de l'hémisphère nord sont pauvres en ressources génétiques, c'est principalement dans les pays du sud dits sous-développés qu'on retrouve la plus grande diversité génétique. La Turquie, par exemple, recèle à elle seule près de 11 000 espèces végétales tandis que l'Europe n'en totalise guère plus de 11 500. C'est-à-dire que le bassin génétique de la Turquie équivaut à celui de tout l'Europe.

La criminalité biologique dont il est question est le fait des entreprises internationales qui visent, en fait, la domination et l'exploitation des ressources génétiques des pays du tiers-monde qu'elles considèrent aujourd'hui comme l'or vert du siècle.

En bref :

- La culture des OGM comporte des risques sérieux pour la santé d'humaine (réactions allergiques, affaiblissement au système immunitaire, infections virales, etc.).

- L'agriculture avec des OGM est une technique totalitaire qui menace la biodiversité et l'agriculture biologique.
- En utilisant des semences contenant des OGM, les fermiers sont obligés d'acheter de nouvelles semences après chaque récolte. Les fermiers qui utilisent les semences contenant des OGM sont aussi amenés à employer plus de pesticides. Aujourd'hui, des fermiers américains, mécontents de l'état de stérilité de leur production, intentent des poursuites judiciaires contre les commerces des OGM.

## NOS DEMANDES

- 1) Nous refusons catégoriquement ces produits contenant des OGM dont on ne connaît pas encore les impacts futurs sur l'écologie et l'humain, les effets secondaires sur la santé, sur l'écosystème planétaire. Nous demandons que soit bloquée l'entrée de ces matières en Turquie.
- 2) L'agriculture employant des OGM est une technique de destruction massive de toutes autres formes d'agriculture et spécialement de l'agriculture biologique. Pour cette raison, l'entrée au pays des semences contenant des OGM doit être interdite et l'agriculture employant les OGM ne doit pas être permise. La production agricole doit être faite suivant les cycles et rythmes de la nature.
- 3) Les aliments contenant des OGM sont une menace réelle à la survie des traditions culturelles alimentaires locales. Dans l'éventualité d'importation de produits d'OGM, nous demandons qu'ils soient identifiés par des étiquettes explicites sur leur contenu et sur la nature des OGM. Nous pensons que les consommateurs ont le droit de savoir quels sont les produits qui contiennent des OGM et de pouvoir faire leurs propres choix de consommation.
- 4) Nous voulons que les produits d'importation des compagnies qui sont connues comme ayant recours aux OGM - comme Nestle, ou carrément productrices de semences aux OGM – comme Cargill, Novartis, Zeneca, Du-Pont, Syngenta, Monsanto et Dow Chemical, soient contrôlés rigoureusement.
- 5) Le Ministère de la Santé et les services publics officiels devraient entreprendre un contrôle sérieux des produits enrichis aux OGM compte tenu du fait que 98% d'entre eux contiennent des insecticides.
- 6) Les groupes tels les associations de fermiers et chambres des agriculteurs doivent consulter le mémorandum dans le cadre de la lutte contre les produits contenant des OGM. C'est la seule façon de créer, face à l'imminence du danger de propagation, des zones protégées excluant toute intrusion d'OGM.
- 7) Les ONG, de même que les organisations environnementalistes et écologistes, les chambres agricoles et les organisations de protection des consommateurs doivent pouvoir participer au Comité National de Biosécurité.
- 8) Les mémorandum et les manifestations d'opposition à l'utilisation de semences enrichies aux OGM, ne doivent pas se limiter aux zones où l'équilibre écologique est particulièrement fragile.
- 9) Les produits destinés à l'agriculture contenant des OGM sont meilleur marché que les produits conventionnels, ce qui porte les cultivateurs et éleveurs turcs à s'y

convertir. Il est du devoir de l'état et des ONG de s'assurer que les institutions publiques, en particulier aux niveaux local et régional, soient à même de leur fournir l'information appropriée.

- 10) L'Accord International sur la Biosécurité défini lors du Protocole de Carthagène est entré en vigueur le 24 janvier. Cependant, son application dépend de la réalisation des modifications législatives et du plan d'intervention national d'urgence. Selon l'obligation pour chaque pays d'adopter des mesures de contrôles des produits contenant des OGM, les interdictions définies par les articles 11 et 12 du Règlement du Ministère de l'agriculture doivent rester en application.
- 11) Le Codex Turc des Produits Alimentaires devrait reconnaître la nature des produits contenant des OGM et les interdire pour cause de risques pour la santé.
- 12) L'État doit empêcher l'attribution de brevet menaçant la santé, l'ordre public, l'équilibre environnemental, l'écosystème et la diversité biologique et envisager l'annulation des brevets déjà accordés.
- 13) Nos lois, codes et règlements existants, nos services douaniers et nos laboratoires d'analyse ne sont pas prêts. Il faut que les préparatifs et mesures législatives nécessaires soient entrepris au plus tôt.
- 14) Le bassin génétique de la Turquie est l'un des plus riches. L'état et les ONG doivent instituer des mesures officielles pour la protection et la durabilité de cette ressource, et des lois pour en assurer la protection face à la menace des compagnies internationales.

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Sites turcs contenant la pétition :

[www.gdo.bugday.org](http://www.gdo.bugday.org)

<http://gdo.ekolojikpolitika.org>