



Taylor & Francis  
Taylor & Francis Group

ROAPE Publications Ltd.

---

Let Nature's Harvest Continue: African Counter-Statement to Monsanto

Author(s): Wangari Maathai

Source: *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 25, No. 77, Britain's African Policy: Ethical, or Ignorant? (Sep., 1998), pp. 529-531

Published by: [Taylor & Francis, Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4006512>

Accessed: 03/02/2014 02:54

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



Taylor & Francis, Ltd. and ROAPE Publications Ltd. are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Review of African Political Economy*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

## Let Nature's Harvest Continue

### African Counter-Statement to Monsanto

*An invitation to stand in solidarity to resist gene technology, from Delegates to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on Plant Genetic Resources.*

During the past few weeks European citizens have been exposed to an aggressive publicity campaign in major European newspapers trying to convince the reader that the world needs genetic engineering to feed the hungry. Organised and financed by Monsanto, one of the worlds biggest chemical companies, this campaign gives a totally distorted and misleading picture of the potential of genetic engineering to feed developing countries.

We, the undersigned delegates of African countries negotiating at the FAO on farmers rights, access and benefit-sharing, strongly object that the image of the poor and hungry from our countries are being used by giant multinational corporations to push a technology that is neither safe, environment friendly, nor economically beneficial to us. It is time to look at some of the facts about the company behind this campaign.

- Monsanto is one of the world's largest pesticide companies. During the past two years only it spent over US\$6,000 million to take control over other seed and biotechnology companies and is now the major industrial player in this field. Its major focus is not to protect the environment, but to develop crops that can resist higher doses of its best-selling chemical weedkiller 'Roundup'.
- Rather than stretching a helping hand to farmers, Monsanto threatens them with lawsuits and jail, In the USA, the company employs tactics to find and bring to court those farmers that save Monsanto soybean seeds for next year's

planting. Backed by patent law, the company demands the right to inspect the farmers' fields to check whether they practise agriculture according to Monsanto conditions and with Monsanto chemicals,

- Rather than developing technology that feeds the world, Monsanto uses genetic engineering to stop farmers from replanting seed and further develop their agricultural systems. It has spent US\$18,000 million to buy a company owning a patent on what has become known as 'Terminator Technology': seed that can be planted only once and dies in the second generation. The only aim of this technology is to force farmers back to the Monsanto shop every year, and to destroy an age old practice of local seed saving that forms the basis of food security in our countries.

In the advertising campaign Europeans are asked to give an unconditional green light to gene technology so that chemical corporations such as Monsanto can start harvesting their profits from it. We do not believe that such companies or gene technologies will help our farmers to produce the food that is needed in the 21st century. On the contrary, we think It will destroy the diversity, the local knowledge and the sustainable agricultural systems that our farmers have developed for millennia and that it will thus undermine our capacity to feed ourselves.

In particular, we will not accept the use of 'Terminator' or other gene technologies that kill the capacity of our farmers to grow the food we need.

**We invite European citizens and colleagues from the South to stand in solidarity with Africa in resisting these gene technologies so that our diverse and natural harvests can continue and grow.**

We agree and accept that mutual help is needed to further improve agricultural production in our countries. We also believe that Western science can contribute to this. But it should be done on the basis of understanding and respect for what is already there. It should be building on local knowledge, rather than replacing and destroying it. And most importantly: it should address the real needs of our people, rather than serving only to swell the pockets and control of giant industrial corporations.

Additional Statement by Zimbabwean Delegate:

*Africa should not be used as a testing ground for technologies and products which have been developed elsewhere. We reserve our sovereign right to test these technologies ourselves, examine their effectiveness and compatibility to the environment in our region.*

Signed in support and solidarity by:

Action Aid  
Austrian Mountain Farmers  
Association Baby Milk Action  
Basque Farmers Union  
Banana Link  
BUKO Agro  
Catholic Institute for International Relations  
Centro Internazionale Crocevia  
Coordination Paysanne Europeenne  
Christian Aid  
CSA (Comitato Scientifico Antivivisezionista).  
Farmers Link  
FIN (Fondo Imperatrice Nuda contro la Sperimentazione Animale)  
Find Your Feet  
Friends of the Earth  
The Gaia Foundation  
Genetic Resources Action International  
GeneWatch  
Greenpeace International  
The Green Party  
The Green Party Agriculture and Food Working Group.

The Green Group of the European Parliament  
GEYSER Organization, France  
ITDG  
prof. Valeria Negri, Istituto di Miglioramento Genetico Vegetale,  
prof. Egizia Falistocco, Istituto di Miglioramento Genetico Vegetale,  
prof. Luisa Lanfaloni, Istituto di Miglioramento Genetico Vegetale  
dr. Nicola Tosti, Istituto di Miglioramento Genetico Vegetale  
dr. Paola Taviani, Istituto di Miglioramento Genetico Vegetale  
dr. Piorelia Pimpinelli, Istituto di Miglioramento Genetico Vegetale  
Dr. Beatrix Tappeser, Institute for Applied Ecology, Friburg  
Ecoropa  
The Pesticides Trust  
World Development Movement  
Women's Environmental Network  
WWF-Italy and Fulco Pratesi (president)

*Wangari Maathai*, Coordinator, The Green Belt Movement, Nairobi, Kenya

\* \* \* \*

**Campaigns (the full listing is in the August 1997 issue of *New Internationalist*)**

CONSUMERS INTERNATIONAL, 24 Highbury Crescent, London N5 1RX, UK;  
e-mail: consint@consint.org.uk

EARTH FIRST!, Box 1415, Eugene, OR 97440, USA;  
e-mail: earthfirst@igc.apc.org

GENETIC RESOURCES ACTION INTERNATIONAL (GRAIN): Girona 25, pral. E-08010 Barcelona, Spain;  
e-mail: grain@gn.apc.org

GREENPEACE: Greenpeace House, Canonbury Villas, Islington, London N1 2PN, UK;  
Net: <http://www.greenpeace.org>

**PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK (PAN):**  
PANNA, 116 New Montgomery (#810),  
San Francisco, CA 94105, USA;  
e-mail: panna@panna.org

**RAFI (RURAL ADVANCEMENT FOUNDATION  
INTERNATIONAL):** International Office,  
Suite 504, 71 Bank St., Ottawa, ON,  
K1P 5N2Canada;  
e-mail: rafican@rafi.ca

**THIRD WORLD NETWORK:** International  
Secretariat, 228 Macalister Rd., 10400  
Penang, Malaysia;  
e-mail: twn@igc.apc.org

**AUSTRALIAN GENEETHICS NETWORK:** 340  
Gore St., Fitzroy, Vic 3065, Melbourne;  
e-mail: actgenet@peg.apc.org

**GAIA FOUNDATION:** 18 Well Walk,  
Hamptead, London NW3 1LD, UK;  
e-mail: gaiafund@gn.apc.org

**GEN (GENETIC ENGINEERING NETWORK),**  
Box 9656, London N4 4JY, UK.

**WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK:** 87  
Worship St., London EC2A 2BE;  
e-mail: ricarda@gn.apc.org

---

## 'Dictated Trade: The Case Against the Africa Growth & Opportunity Act'

*William Martin, ACAS*

President Bill Clinton and the U.S. Congress should be applauded for seeking to define a new US foreign policy toward Africa that recognizes the demands from the continent for political, social and economic change. ACAS also welcomes the legislation's intent to strengthen U.S. ties with the continent. The current draft of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act pending before the Senate, however, is worse than no bill at all.

While this trade and investment legislation has won the enthusiastic support of some African governments, and the more lukewarm support of others (note President Nelson Mandela's dissent), other African social movements and analysts have long argued that the policies promoted by the bill will result in yet greater hunger, poverty, and foreign control over the continent [for more information see the Public Citizen web site. The Act does break new ground: it proposes to shift our relationship with Africa from aid to trade and investment. In fact, this month as the trade legislation is being debated, the Senate is also proposing cuts in foreign aid that will result in a 20% to 30% reduction in foreign aid to Africa according to the Clinton administration.

The legislation offers a series of rewards for countries pursuing IMF style market-led economic reforms, including expanded duty free access to American markets for certain products, equity and infrastructure funds to support US investment, and the establishment of a mechanism to promote and review trade policy toward Africa.

Promoters of the Act, however, have been unable to demonstrate how African pro-