

# Sprouting Up...

## A Global Week of Action against GM, in Andhra Pradesh, India

GRAIN & DDS

### Southern Encounters – an international consultation on Bt cotton

In *Southern Encounters - an international consultation on Bt cotton* held in Hyderabad, in the South Indian State of Andhra Pradesh (14-15 April 2005), farmers from India, Indonesia, Mali, South Africa, Canada, and scientists and researchers from Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines denounced GE technology as they narrated a common experience with Bt cotton and other genetically engineered crops such as Bt maize, Bt soya, GM canola and GM papaya (see *Sprouting up: GM Papaya*).

As the agri-biotechnology industry argues that GM crops are needed to combat hunger in the South, the evidence demonstrates that industry is more concerned about its own profits. Other arguments by the industry in continuing to grow GM crops include a reduction in pesticide use and increased profits for small-scale farmers, all of which are turning out to be untrue.

In this issue of Seedling we have an article on Bt cotton demonstrably failing farmers in South Africa, and at Southern Encounters, details were given of a three year study in Andhra Pradesh, India, showing the same thing: that Bt cotton has failed farmers (see the Box on page 19).

An Indonesian farmer recounted how they were promised that Bt cotton would yield 3 to 5 times higher than local varieties but in the end produced much lower yields of local varieties. Many Indonesian farmers like him suffered considerable losses from planting Bt cotton. Along with others, he decided to use direct action such as burning Bt cotton fields and joining street rallies to protest and demand compensation.

In Thailand, in 1999, farmer's groups found GM contamination of their cotton. It was estimated that 8,000 hectares of Bt cotton are being grown illegally. An alliance of 35 farmer groups and NGOs threatened to stage a mass rally unless the government responded to their calls for a stop to the testing and commercial release of genetically engineered crops. The government reacted by terminating field trials of Monsanto's Bt cotton.

In the Philippines, the Department of Agriculture approved Monsanto's Bt maize in 2002 for commercialisation. The area planted to Bt maize has increased, but farmers' incomes have not. The same government department plans to introduce Bt cotton, GM rice and GM papaya in the next two years.

### New coalitions against GM

#### SOUTH AGAINST GENETIC ENGINEERING LAUNCHED

As part of the Global Week of Action, a new coalition *SOUTH AGAINST GENETIC ENGINEERING (SAGE)* was launched. With over 60 members from across South India, the coalition has civil society groups, farmers, scientists, academics, consumer groups as its members and is led by the Deccan Development Society.

#### ANDHRA PRADESH COALITION FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Ten civil society networks representing over 120 NGOs coming from 15 districts of Andhra Pradesh have formed a new coalition called Andhra Pradesh Coalition for Food Sovereignty under the leadership of Deccan Development Society. The new Coalition has for its aims, achievement of Community Food Sovereignty, networking of food farmers especially from Dryland districts and to create a movement against the corporatisation of agriculture.

### Women farmers protest in front of ICRISAT (the International Crop Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics)

Around 500 women farmers demonstrated outside ICRISAT near Hyderabad on the 15 April 2005, an institution which has turned its back on small-holder farmers. Instead ICRISAT, a member of CGIAR, have been blinded by big business and biotechnology. So the farmers were demanding that ICRISAT stop bending over backwards for transnational corporations.

*"Please hand us back our germplasm. Close down your gene banks. They have already turned into Gene Morgues. Now they will be turned by you into seeds for predatory corporate profits."*

**"THIS IS OUR HERITAGE,  
GIVE IT BACK TO US."**

See [http://www.ddsindia.com/southernencounters\\_note.htm](http://www.ddsindia.com/southernencounters_note.htm) for more details

[http://www.ddsindia.com/observation\\_gwa.htm](http://www.ddsindia.com/observation_gwa.htm) for more details

