

Thursday 3rd May

Press Release – Immediate Release

“Take the Seed Back” - International Support for Take The Flour Back

The African Biodiversity Network and The Gaia Foundation support the call from Take the Flour Back for Rothamsted Research Institute to remove their GM wheat crop to prevent contamination. Gathuru Mburu, Coordinator of the African Biodiversity Network (ABN) will be speaking at the “Take the Flour Back” rally at Rothamsted on 27th May.

Gathuru Mburu, who will be in the UK at the end of May for the launch of a new film about the corporate takeover of seed through GMOs, has made the following statement:

“It gives us strength to see the British people standing up to the irresponsible release of genetically modified foods into the ecosystem. We have seen the negative effects that crops like this have had in India, where GM cotton crops failed in their claims of pest resistance, and sent farmers into spiraling debt. Experimenting with staple crops is a serious threat to food security. Our resilience comes from diversity not from monocultures of GM. Seed saving is the basis of African farmers’ security and livelihood, but patented GM crops forbid farmers from saving their own seed. This is a violation of Farmers’ Rights. Furthermore, there is always a strong likelihood that GM will cross-pollinate with our crops, and that we will lose our indigenous diversity forever. Indigenous seed is traditionally celebrated in African rites of passage, so GM will further erode Africa’s Rights to indigenous, cultural foods and the knowledge systems which surround these.”

Gathuru Mburu will be visiting the UK for the launch of *Seeds of Freedom*, a new film which exposes the corporate takeover of seed through genetic modification and patenting, and the impact that this has already had on biodiversity and farmers’ livelihoods. The film, which is narrated by British Actor Jeremy Irons, includes interviews with Dr Vandana Shiva, Zac Goldsmith Conservative MP and Caroline Lucas Green MP.

Mburu continues: *“Beneath the rhetoric that GM is the key to feeding a hungry world, there is a very different story, a story of control and profit. This story is about controlling seed, and thereby the farmer, his land, and the food system. The globalisation of food markets has led to growing hunger, and the unrelenting greed of corporations who see the huge financial potential in controlling the global food system. Farmers and communities in the areas most affected by food shortages and climate change do not want GM. GM does not support a resilient, nutritious or sustainable food system. Instead it creates dependence on corporations and increased vulnerability to hunger and poverty. Actions against GM, by movements like the African Biodiversity Network, Via Campesina, and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa, are happening across Africa and beyond. The fact is that we need a diversity of genetic traits in food crops in order to survive worsening climates. Above all, people need to have control over their seeds”.*

In the film *Seeds of Freedom*, which will be launched by The Gaia Foundation and African Biodiversity Network in London on Monday 28th May, Dr Vandana Shiva of Navdanya states *“Farmers breed for resilience. And therefore they breed for cooperative arrangements. They don’t breed one crop. They know they must have many crops because the climate changes. They know they must have many crops, because nutritional needs are diverse. Once a company starts to see royalty collections from every seed, it pushes its genetically engineered crops, to replace the native crops that farmers and peasants have grown over millennia.”*

Henk Hobbelink, Coordinator of GRAIN, who this week published the book 'The Great Food Robbery' also features in the film and asks *"What are we supposed to do with these GM seeds? Seeds are supposed to be planted, multiplied, exchanged, further adapted, and so on. That's exactly what is not allowed from the corporate mindset. The corporations sell or license us the seed to use the seed in a specific way – the way that they are interested in. Full stop."*

At the close of Seeds of Freedom, MP Zac Goldsmith asserts that the GM agenda is *"nothing to do with feeding the world. It's nothing to do with tackling some of the huge issues we're facing today. It's about control of the food sector, of the food economy. We need to radically change course, and return to diversity"*.

Liz Hosken, Director of The Gaia Foundation has also spoken out in support of the campaign by Take the Flour Back. She says, *"The contamination risk that the Rothamsted wheat trial poses cannot be underestimated. But there is also much more to this debate than what we see here in the UK. As things stand today, GM is the tool used to see out a corporate agenda for the takeover and monopoly of the global food system. The potential for profit through controlling something so essential to us all, is what really drives GMO research. Small scale, diversity-rich farming is being eroded and replaced with ever-larger monocultures deserts. This displaces farmers from their land, and huge amounts of traditional agricultural knowledge and diverse indigenous seeds are lost forever. We cannot support any trial which reinforces the myth that GM is there as a benefit to people and planet, when in reality it feeds not humans, but a greedy corporate agenda."*

- ENDS - Notes to Editors

Images of the Africa Biodiversity Network seed saving events and of indigenous seeds are available. Contact to request. To arrange interviews with Gathuru Mburu or members of the African Biodiversity Network please contact Rowan Phillimore on 0207 428 0054/0774 894 5204.

Media call to the launch of Seeds of Freedom:

Seeds of Freedom will be launched on Monday 28th May, 6.30pm at the Garden Museum, central London. This is a private launch for press and invited guests. Gathuru Mburu (Kenya) and Mphatheleini Maukalule (South Africa) of the African Biodiversity Network will be attending the launch and available for interviews throughout Monday 28th May. **Please contact Rowan Phillimore on 0207 428 0054/ 0774 894 5204 or rowan@gaianet.org if you would like to attend the media launch or arrange a private interview.**

Watch a 3-minute trailer for the film here: <https://vimeo.com/30792307>

Seeds of Freedom explores the history of the corporate takeover of seed, most notably through the development of GM as a means of patenting seed. The film shows how the loss of indigenous seed leads to further loss of biodiversity, which is essential for building climate resilience and establishing food justice. Alongside interviews with African farmers, the film features interviews with Dr Vandana Shiva (Director of Navdanya, author of the 2011 report *The GMO Emperor has No Clothes*), Zac Goldsmith MP, Caroline Lucas MP, Kumi Naidoo (Head of Greenpeace International), Percy Schmeiser (Canadian farmer sued by GM giant Monsanto), John Vidal (Environment Editor, *The Guardian*), Dr Melaku Worrede (Ethiopian Scientist who has pioneered seed saving methods in Ethiopia), Gathuru Mburu (Coordinator of the African Biodiversity Network, Kenya), Liz Hosken (Director of The Gaia Foundation),

and Henk Hobbelink (Coordinator of GRAIN International, who recently published *The Great Food Robbery*).

The final 30-minute film is being narrated by British Actor Jeremy Irons, who became the UN Goodwill Ambassador for Food & Agriculture in 2011.