

4 December 2006

**Open Letter to the United States Agency for International Development
(USAID) and the World Food Programme (WFP)**

AFRICA WILL NOT ACCEPT BEING THE DUMPING GROUND FOR GMOs

CONTAMINATED FOOD AID MUST BE RECALLED FROM AFRICA

Since the United States commercialised Genetically Modified crops, shipments of food aid originating from this country have been found to be contaminated with Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).ⁱ

Pressure on Africa to accept GMOs as food aid heightened during the food crisis in Zambia in 2002 and later on in Angola and Sudan in 2004.ⁱⁱ Years after, Zambia has proved to the world that a country can cope even in a situation of food crisis, without GM food aid, and the **right to say no** has also been recognized by the World Food Programme.

Despite the fact that alternative supplies to GM food exist in the world, shipments from the World Food Programme and USAID have been confirmed to be contaminated by GMOs, many times in the last years. Efforts to purchase food aid locally, or as close as possible to the recipient countries have not been sufficient, and food aid in kind, instead of cash continues to be the common rule of USAID. The World Food Programme has not done enough to tackle the already identified key structural problems of food aid.

Now, rice sent as food aid by USAID to Sierra Leone has been found to be contaminated with illegal experimental GM rice, known as LL601, belonging to Bayer CropScience. The presence of the illegal rice was verified in several samples of U.S. food aid and commercial imports after tests were conducted in an independent laboratory in the U.S. The unapproved GM rice has also been detected in rice imported into Ghana and Sierra Leone and the results were publicly announced by civil society groups in Africa in the morning of the 24th of November.ⁱⁱⁱ

Astonishingly, after this announcement, the experimental rice LL601 found in Africa was given commercial approval by the United States Department for Agriculture (USDA) on the evening of the 24th November.^{iv}

The GM rice was only released for experimental purposes, and even Bayer CropScience, the developer, dropped plans to commercialize the variety, known as LibertyLink601 (LL601), five years ago. The U.S. based Center for Food Safety has strongly condemned its government decision since no exhaustive testing has been done on LL601 to guarantee that the GM rice would not create human health or environmental hazards.^v

We, the undersigned groups consider the approval of GM rice immediately after the announcement that it had been found in US food aid sent to Africa to be a

blatant insult to African people. USDA's stamp of approval to genetically engineered rice after it had illegally contaminated the food supply completely erodes all trust in the US Food System. Africa will not accept being the dumping ground for unwanted GM rice.

We call on the World Food Programme and the USAID to ensure that GMOs are not introduced via food aid, and that countries receiving food aid are adequately informed about the content of food aid shipments.

We are also calling for USAID to immediately recall all rice sent as food aid, which has been contaminated with LL601 varieties, and to ask Bayer, the developer to pay for the costs.

Signed by,

Friends of the Earth, Nigeria
The African Centre for Biosafety, South Africa
Friends of the Earth, Sierra Leone
Friends of the Earth Ghana
Friends of the Earth Cameroon
The Institute of Science in Society
Friends of the Earth Denmark
CEE Bankwatch Network
Social Action, Nigeria
Yonge Nawe, Swaziland
Haiti Survie/FoE-Haiti
CESTA-FoE El Salvador
Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre, Zambia
Young Volunteers for the Environment, Togo
CELCOR - Friends of Earth Papua New Guinea
Biowatch, South Africa
Sobrevivencia, FoE Paraguay
WALHI/ Friends of the Earth Indonesia
FoE Australia
FoE Cyprus
FoE US
Amigos de la Tierra España (Friends of the Earth Spain)
Friends of the Earth Malaysia
The Consumers Association of Penang, Malaysia
Consumer Protection Organisation of Nigeria
groundWork, South Africa
Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria
Lion Gate Chamber (legal practitioners), Nigeria
Obey & Ereka (Legal Practitioners), Nigeria
The Green Movement of Georgia/FoE Georgia
Biological Science Students Association, University of Abuja, Nigeria
Friends of the Earth Norway
Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland
LRC-KSK/Friends of the Earth-Philippines
CERDET Amigos de la Tierra, Bolivia

Safe Food Coalition (South Africa)
Green Movement of Lithuania, FoE Lithuania
Friends of the Earth Finland
Earthlife Africa eThekweni, Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa
Mother Earth (Friends of the Earth Flanders
GM Freeze UK
EarthRights International
FoE Canada
Movimiento Madre Tierra/FoE Honduras
FoE Slovakia
ATPNE/FoE Tunisia
Amigos de la Tierra - Buenos Aires Argentina
FoE Brazil
FoE Malta
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ⁱ Food aid have been confirmed contaminated with GMOs thanks to laboratory testing in manifold occasion in food aid in Latinamerica, i.e. Ecuador, Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua. See FoEI. 2003. Playing with hunger. http://www.foei.org/publications/pdfs/playing_with_hunger2.pdf

StarLink, illegal GM maize for human consumption everywhere in the world was found again in Guatemala in 2005. See Alianza Centroamericana de Protección a la Biodiversidad. 2005. World Food Programme and the United States denounced for the distribution of genetically modified organisms in Central America and the Caribbean. February 16. http://www.humboldt.org.ni/transgenicos/denuncia_englishfeb16.htm

ⁱⁱ See ERA, African Center for Biosafety, Earthlife Eafrika, SAFEAGE, GRAIN. 2004. GM Food Aid: Africa denied choice once again? http://www.eraction.org/publications/Africa_GM_food_aid%5B1%5D.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ See Friends of the Earth Africa. 2006. US rice imports sent to West Africa are contaminated with illegal GM rice. http://www.eraction.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27
See FoE Africa briefing on rice contamination:

http://www.eraction.org/publications/FoEAfrica_briefing01.pdf

^{iv} USDA deregulates line of genetically engineered rice:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/content/2006/11/rice_deregulate.shtml

^v Center for Food Safety. 2006. USDA Gives Rubber-Stamp Market Approval to Genetically Engineered Rice Contaminating Food Supply. Press Release 24 November.

http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/press_room.cfm