

For Immediate Release

Red Alert on Green Fuels

Biofuels igniting global crisis for food, people and the planet

Ottawa, April 17 2008. The rush to get into biofuels production has ignited a major crisis for the planet. This according to the Canadian and global farm leaders and agriculture specialists from around the world speaking across Canada April 28-May 1 at public forums entitled “*Crops, Cars and Climate Crisis*”.

The world is on the brink of a major food crisis, exacerbated by rising grain prices, seriously depleted food supplies, and land being used to produce ethanol fuel instead of food, the organizers say. According to the UN World Food Programme, rising food prices are already causing conflict in 33 countries.

“Food-related clashes in Mexico, Haiti and the Philippines are clear signals that the world needs to wake up fast and deal with the problem”, says Pat Mooney of the ETC Group. “We’re heading into a perfect storm without even an umbrella,” he says. “Climate change, agrofuels and alarming food shortages are a deadly combination for the planet. We’re going to see hunger and social unrest affecting hundreds of millions of people, at a scale not seen in decades.”

In Latin America, expanding soy monoculture is causing violence against farmers, and widespread human rights abuses. “Where do companies get the land needed to produce agrofuels on a large scale? In Colombia, Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, people are being kicked off their land to make way for soy, sugar and palm oil plantations for agrofuels,” says Javiera Rulli, of Base Investigaciones Sociales, based in Paraguay.

“Farmers in our countries pay with their blood so that people in rich countries can feed their cars,” says Rulli. The grain used to fill one SUV tank with ethanol could feed a person for a year.

“To grow biofuels, agricultural corporations are eating up forests and water resources at an alarming rate,” says Ditdit Pelegrina of the Philippines-based organization SEARICE. In Indonesia and Malaysia alone, millions of hectares of forest have been cut down for agrofuel production. Forests are our biggest defence against climate change since they absorb carbon, says Pelegrina.

Lucy Sharratt of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network sees agrofuels as one more way our food supply is falling into corporate hands. “Corporations claim they can fix the failing dream of agrofuels with ‘second generation’ technologies, like genetically engineered crops and trees,” she says. “Genetic engineering and synthetic biology will only add to the nightmare of corporate control and environmental risk.” Corporations are pursuing GE trees for ethanol at a time when there is an international call for a ban on transgenic trees, says Sharratt.

Pat Mooney says we need a whole new framework in which to view agrofuels. “Instead of speeding ahead with mandatory agrofuel targets, subsidies and tax breaks, we’re asking governments and corporations to put the brakes on agrofuels,” says Mooney. “Where are the policies and incentives needed to help Canadians, the world’s biggest energy consumers per person, face the global reality?”

More details on page 2...

**Beyond
Factory
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**Canadian
Biotechnology
Action
Network**

ETC Group

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CROPS, CARS AND CLIMATE CRISIS: PUBLIC FORUMS ON AGROFUELS:

Monday April 28: Saskatoon
Monday April 28: Charlottetown
Tuesday April 29: Halifax
Tuesday April 29: Winnipeg
Wednesday April 30: Ottawa
Thursday May 1: Montreal

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Wilhelmina "Ditdit" Pelegrina, SEARICE, Philippines
Javiera Rulli, BASEIS, Paraguay
Soledad Vogliano, CEPPAS, Argentina
Alberto Gomez, La Via Campesina, Mexico
Ousmane Samake, COPAGEN, Mali
Melaku Worede, USC Canada, Seeds of Survival, Ethiopia
Peter Rosset, Global Alternatives, US and Mexico
Marilyn Machado, PCN, Colombia
Helena Paul, EcoNexus, United Kingdom
Sharon Labchuk, P.E.I Coalition for a GMO-Free Province, Charlottetown, Canada
Devlin Kuyek, GRAIN International, Montreal, Canada
Darrin Qualman, National Farmers Union, Saskatoon, Canada
Pat Mooney, ETC Group, Ottawa, Canada

- 30 -

For more information, and to arrange an interview with speakers:

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FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT www.cban.ca/agrofuels