
[PAN joins the struggle against transgenic trees](#)

The Sixth Meeting of the Pesticide Action Network (PAN) took place in Penang, Malaysia from 28 November to 3 December 2007. The 25th Anniversary of the foundation of this Network was celebrated in the same city that saw it come into being: Penang.

PAN is a network involving over 600 non-governmental organizations, institutions and individuals, who work in over 90 countries to replace the use of dangerous pesticides by ecologically and socially just alternatives.

Although when it started out, PAN was centred on the struggle against the use of agrotoxics, technological changes brought on a new problem – transgenic crops – an issue that was incorporated into PAN's working agenda some time ago.

At this last meeting, PAN also included in its declaration of principles the issue of genetically modified trees, thus formally joining opposition to transgenic trees. In its declaration it set out the need for:

“Creating awareness of the dangers of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and campaigning to stop the development and use of GMOs in food, agriculture, pharmaceutical crops and animals, **forestry** and prevent terminator seeds. We demand the implementation of the precautionary principle to prevent the spread of the use of GMOs.”

PAN understands that with the introduction of this new technology the struggle to make progress in ecological management and in the elimination of the production, marketing and use of dangerous pesticides is further hindered, as it is accompanied by the massive use of agrotoxics and by large monoculture plantations that are far from being a sustainable model of production for ensuring the food sovereignty of the people.

The incorporation of transgenic trees into PAN's work is a fundamental element in the struggle against the model imposed by the large transnational companies. In addition to generating new and unknown risks, transgenic trees exacerbate the negative impacts of large monoculture tree plantations which occupy lands previously given over to the production of foodstuffs, placing them at the service of large transnational corporations.

One of the negative impacts that would be worsened is linked to the enormous consumption of water of such plantations, because one of the characteristics to be introduced is even faster tree growth, implying greater use of water.

However, negative impacts are not only limited to water, but also involve the flora – as research is being done on the incorporation of genes making the trees resistant to weed-killers – and the fauna – with genes providing the trees with insecticide characteristics.

Finally, genetic manipulation aims at consolidating and expanding a model of monoculture tree plantations that has already shown itself to have serious negative social and environmental impacts

all over the world.

Throughout its 25 years of existence, PAN has achieved many things, but its work is becoming increasingly complex, as it has to face new challenges imposed by an unsustainable agricultural and forestry model. The incorporation of PAN to the campaign against transgenic trees is yet another element to protect food sovereignty, people's rights and biodiversity; in sum, to protect life itself By Maria Isabel Carcamo, PAN Uruguay, rapaluy@chasque.net, www.chasque.net/rapaluy