
NGOs demand exclusion of GE trees from Kyoto Protocol's CDM at Climate Convention

In 2003, a committee of the 9th Conference of the Parties (COP 9) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held in Milan, established that GE trees could be used within the so called Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in plantations created to allegedly offset the carbon emissions from factories in the industrialized North.

In response, an international network of groups came together to demand the UN to get GE trees out of Kyoto. They felt that the decision that enabled corporations to sell “carbon credits” had become even more troublesome with the inclusion of risky and uncertain GE trees plantations to be used as carbon dumps – it had only made a bad situation worse (see WRM Bulletin N° 80).

CAN (Climate Action Network), a global network of environmental NGOs from around the globe working to promote government and individual action to limit human induced climate change, had also demanded the exclusion of monoculture tree plantations from the CDM on the grounds that large commercial plantations threaten biological diversity, watershed protection, and local sustainable livelihoods. The group asked, as well, for the strict exclusion of genetically modified or invasive alien species from CDM afforestation and reforestation projects.

This year UNFCCC's COP12 met in Nairobi, Kenya, from 6 to 17 November. Once again the demand to prohibit the use of genetically engineered trees in plantations designed as carbon sinks was put forward.

“The release of GE trees in huge plantations to store carbon must be banned,” stated Anne Petermann of Global Justice Ecology Project, who explained: “The escape of pollen or seeds from GE trees into native forests would cause severe and totally unpredictable ecological impacts that could impact the ability of forests to store carbon, worsening global warming”. Andrew Boswell of the Large Scale Biofuels Action Group added: “In the light of the precautionary decision on GE Trees made by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in March 2006, we urge the countries of the South to stay resolutely cautious about adopting these technologies that are not in their control, nor likely to be in their best interests.”

Sadly, the Convention served as a forum for big interests that care too little about the environment and people and too much about money (see News from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - COP 12, at <http://www.wrm.org.uy/actors/CCC/index.html#nairobi>).

Article based on: “CAN Recommendations: Modalities for Including Afforestation and Deforestation under Article 12”, COP 9, December 2003; “False & Destructive “Solutions” to Global Warming: Groups Condemn Large-Scale Biofuels, Genetically Engineered Trees & Crops, Monoculture Tree Plantations”, Press Release at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Nairobi, Kenya, 16 November 2006.

