

An invitation to

Planet Diversity

Local, Diverse, GMO-Free

**World Congress on the Future of Food and Farming
Bonn, Germany, 12th-16th May 2008**

What? *Planet Diversity* will be an international congress of people who are promoting biodiversity in farming and gardening, food and culture, and those who use, preserve and develop this diversity at the local level. Over five days it will feature major speakers, workshops, a 'biodiversity bazaar', a farmer's jury, films and other events and actions. *Planet Diversity* will help those working to maintain irreplaceable natural and cultural diversity in agriculture reach a wide audience and connect among themselves: a "coming out" of many different initiatives under the common banner of diversity and food sovereignty.

Why? Food and agriculture are at the heart of the unprecedented challenges of climate change and loss of biodiversity. Technocratic concepts of agriculture and the commodification of biomass for the global food, feed, fuel and fibre industries have accelerated the problems. While time to stop irreversible destruction and extinction is running out, key governments, global industries and scientific institutions retain their dangerous faith in centralised, technology-driven mega-solutions.

Meanwhile, the global movement of resistance to genetically modified organisms has been one of the most successful social movements with respect to agriculture and food in recent years. Beyond rejection of a specific technology, it encompasses resistance to trans-national corporate control of the food chain, patents on life, the destruction of rural livelihoods and communities and a critique of industrial agriculture. It is also a common denominator for many movements promoting sustainable agriculture, from organic farming and the free exchange of seeds to fair trade, slow food and critiques of globalisation. *Planet Diversity* seeks to strengthen these initiatives, boost global co-operation and networking, and provide a forum to identify common goals and strategies.

To highlight the pressing challenges facing biological diversity today and raise public awareness, *Planet Diversity* will prelude the 9th Meeting of the Parties to the "Rio" Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, COP-9) and coincide with the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (MOP-4), also taking place in Bonn. The Biosafety Protocol Negotiations will focus on liability and redress for damages caused by genetically modified organisms. Public pressure is needed to achieve any progress there.

Planet Diversity will draw attention to the threat that GMOs pose to biodiversity and the sovereignty and livelihoods of millions of farmers throughout the world.

Who? A local organising committee has already begun work on the event. It includes the German Small Farmers organisation AbL, IFOAM (world organic farmers' organisation), Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Protestant Church Development Service, the Seed Savers and Breeders Initiative, Gene-ethic Network, GENET (European NGOs on genetic engineering), Heinrich Böll Foundation and others. An International Advisory Committee of organisations and personalities from around the world will ensure that the agenda is truly representative of the global reality. The initiative for "Planet Diversity" came from the Third International Conference of GMO-Free Regions, Biodiversity and Rural Development in Brussels, April 2007, approved by 350 participants from 36 countries. (See <http://www.gmo-free-regions.org>). The Secretariat is hosted by the not-for-profit Foundation on Future Farming.

Participants

We expect approximately 500 delegates from around the world who are working on and promoting biodiversity-based agriculture. A special emphasis will be on grassroots activists, farmers and communities, as well as representatives from regional and local governments and institutions, especially from Southern countries. We want them to meet with scientists and experts as well as representatives of NGOs active in the field. A public festival at the beginning of the Congress aims to attract as many citizens from the area as possible and will be sustained by farmers, seed-savers, gardeners, small retailers, chefs and other professionals and amateurs from around Germany and Europe.

Speakers

Speakers will come from the same slate of farmers, grassroots and regional representatives, complemented by some eminent thinkers and globally -renowned biodiversity activists.

Fundraising

The costs of organising such an event are substantial. We are presently seeking financial contributions and support from co-organisers, foundations, institutions and companies. Financial contributions can be made for specific items and under a variety of different arrangements.

Contact:

"Save Our Seeds", Foundation on Future Farming
Marienstr.19-20, 10117 Berlin, Germany
Tel +49 30 27590309 Fax +49 30 27590312
Email: info@planet-diversity.org
www.planet-diversity.org