

Action of civil disobedience against the first transgenic field in the GMO Free Zone of the Algarve

On the 17th of August the "Movimento Verde EufÃ©mia" will go into action of civil disobedience, aiming at the first transgenic field in the GMO Free Zone of the Algarve. We will go in the actual mowing of the crop. Our purpose is to re-establish the democratic, moral and ecological order, which is constantly undermined by the policies of the European Commission and the Portuguese government.

This year the first GMO field ever has been planted in the Algarve Region in Portugal. Already years before the planting of his GM corn there has been strong opposition from civil society against the cultivation of GMOs in the Algarve. This includes social and environmental organisations, farmers and a public opinion who is in general against the cultivation and consumption of GM crops. Also from the political field opposition was made. As a result the Algarve was the first GMO free zone in Portugal declared by the Junta Metropolitana do Algarve already in 2004. On the level of the municipalities over time motions have been passed rejecting the cultivation of GM crops on their territory.

The arguments against GMOs are situated on different levels. For the consumer, the few independent studies that were carried out, indicate that they can induce allergic reactions, cancer and other long term negative effects, which have not been studied profoundly yet. Introducing GM crops in agriculture produces effects that are irreversible. The modified genes quickly start appearing in other crops, on other fields and in other species, a process which is impossible to prevent. Besides that the cultivation of transgenic may induce cumulative effects, since the appearance of weed resistant to herbicides and insects resistant to insecticides until the death of organisms that do not form any danger to the agricultural crops, going along with the appearance of multiple forms of ecological and instabilities. The major study about the effects of transgenic in the environment as published by the British government in 2003. It came to the conclusion that cultivating GMOs is a lot worse to wild life than conventional agriculture. North-American farmers that chose to cultivate GMOs already understood the disadvantages: higher expenses on seeds, more consumption of pesticides, closing international (and even local) markets, products that are less profitable because they are GMOs. Because of genetic contamination, biological farmers are forced to emigrate or change profession. Insurance companies are not willing to secure transgenic cultures because of the high risks involved. Lloyds, one of the major insurance companies allocated GMOs in the same financial risk level as acts of terrorism. The use of GMOs implies that farmers are forbidden to use second generation seeds produced by their own crop. This is an assertion for the seed selling companies to continue their business the next year. Already tens of farmers in the US have already been convicted in tribunal, having used second generation seeds without authorization.

Despite the strong opposition within layers of civil society and from local authorities against GMOs the policies of the Portuguese Government and the European Commission constantly disrespect the moral and democratic right of those opposing actors to ban GMOs from their fields and their plates.

For this reason an informal group of peasants, ecologists and concerned citizens have gathered to take direct action with the aim to re-establish the democratic, moral and ecological order. The movement that we are now starting will go under the name Movimento Verde EufÃ©mia, in homage to the peasant struggle against the former Portuguese fascist regime.

The struggle of Caterina EufÃ©mia and the peasant movement of which she was part aimed at defending the rights and the well-being of peasant communities. Our movement will continue this struggle in the context of new appearing threats, namely the agro-biotechnology sector and their powerful lobby.

On the 17th of August we will take action of civil disobedience, mowing the first GM field in the Algarve, located near the city of Silves with the purpose of keeping the Algarve a GMO free region. With this action we will exercise the right to resist, according to the Article 21st of the Portuguese Constitution, in face of the inaction of the State in the prevention and control of the (genetic) pollution, as is set by Article 66th.

The mowing will be supported by a parade to provide visibility to the action and will be with music, theatre and other artistic and political expressions. While this type of action, involving the mowing of a GM field, will be happening for the first time in Portugal, it will certainly not be an isolated case in Europe. Other groups have been mowing GM fields in several EU countries already. With this action we will follow their example to safeguard GMO Free Zones all over Europe.

We would like to state that we intent no harm to the farmer who for one or another reason chose to cultivate GM crop. Therefore, we propose the farmer to convert to organic farming. For this we offer organic corn seed for the area that is now being planted with GM corn.

We call upon associations within civil society and all concerned citizens to join this civil disobedience movement by mowing existing GM crops in the country. We want Portugal free of GMOs!

We invite the press and all interested people to be present at the meeting point just before the action, which will start at 13h00 in the village of PoÃ§o Barreto, municipality of Silves, in the Algarve.