

Support to the "People's Statement on Saving the Rice of Asia"

In 2006, the LL601 Genetically Engineered Rice caused a mysterious and alarming genetic contamination of rice cultivated in several North American states. LL601-contaminated rice and rice products were subsequently found in many countries in Europe and other parts of the world.

To Asians, Rice is Life. It is central to Asian culture, spirituality, traditions and norms. 2007 will be remembered as the year when grassroots and people's organizations across Asia came together to collectively raise their voices to save their rice, the staple food of half the world's population, from the greed of agrochemical transnational corporations.

They initiated an Asia-wide campaign called "**The Week of Rice Action 2007**" to celebrate and protect rice culture and issued a "**People's Statement on Saving the Rice of Asia**" based on the "Five Pillars of Rice Wisdom": Rice Culture, Community Wisdom, Biodiversity-based Ecological Agriculture, Safe Food and Food Sovereignty.

The People's Statement provides a clear presentation of the current threats to rice culture, rice ecosystems, food safety and food sovereignty of the people of Asia. In this Statement, the grassroots and peoples of 13 countries in Asia call upon national, regional and international policy makers to take immediate action as follows:

1. Enable initiatives to preserve, protect and uphold rice culture and ecological rice agriculture.
2. Undertake genuine agrarian reform instead of enabling the current conversion of rice-lands into amusement parks, real estate development estates, special economic zones, shrimp farms, and cut-flowers, cassava and bio-fuel plantations.
3. Protect the lands and food sovereignty of peasants and indigenous communities from the liberalization of rice trade, the policies of which should be dismantled.
4. Adopt the Precautionary Principle with respect to GMOs: GE rice should be banned.
5. Adopt the policy of "No Patents on Life" by forbidding seeds patenting. Instead, preserve and protect traditional and local rice varieties.
6. Ensure the safety of rice and rice ecosystems: no pesticides and synthetic fertilizers.
7. Strictly limit the use of ground water for irrigation.
8. Close down the International Rice Research Institute, which contributes to the corporate control of seeds and agriculture by agrochemical transnational companies.
9. Uphold the People's Control on Agriculture by implementing farmer-centred agricultural research and systems.

"It is in Rice that we reclaim our rights and the rights of our future generations to our culture, our livelihood, and freedom from hunger."

This "People's Statement on Saving the Rice of Asia" could apply to every staple food in the world. By supporting this Statement, we contribute to resisting the global control of agriculture by transnational corporations.

We, therefore, sign this letter to show our strong support and solidarity with our Asian brothers and sisters to save the rice of Asia and of the World.