

# ANOTHER CONTAMINATION CASE IN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN CATALONIA

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Last Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2006, more than 50 persons cut down a contaminated organic maize field, and burned the nearly 4 tones of maize in protest for the situation organic farmers are living in Catalonia as a consequence of the expansion of GM maize fields.

All this happened in Albons, a small village near the coast 40 km from Girona, to the North of Catalonia, where the number of hectares of GM maize is growing year after year. Enric Navarro, the organic farmer, has built up near this village an agroecologic park, where people can come to learn about our local varieties, medicinal plants, and agroecology in general. On the other hand, Enric also produces organic certified products that are sold in the organic market.

This farmer had planted organic certified maize seeds two years ago and when he harvested he asked for the organic production certifying organism, the CCPAE (Consell Català de la Producció Agrària Ecològica), to analyse the yield. The analysis resulted to be negative for GMOs. The next year he planted 3.300m<sup>2</sup> of the same seed, but problems began the 18<sup>th</sup> of January when the CCPAE told him that the field had been contaminated by GM maize in a 12'6%. This supposes the biggest contamination percentage we have ever seen here in Catalonia. The production was desclassified by the CCPAE, who offered him to sell it as conventional maize. But Enric refused by principles, because he didn't want to introduce contaminated maize in the alimentary chain.

He found himself alone in a difficult situation so he decided to contact Assemblea Pagesa (a social-based agrarian group) and Plataforma Transgènics Fora! (assembleary social-based group that fights against GMO crops and works for a GMO-free Catalonia) to inform us that he had decided to destroy the maize production and make public his case. We were glad to give him support and participate in the organisation of the event.

Before the field was destroyed, some samples were taken in order to make more analysis (the percentage is extremely high) and start a legal procedure against the government. We don't know which the contamination focus is, thus the area is covered by maize fields, a 40% of which are GM maize fields, and normally is under strong wind influence. The nearest fields, which we don't know if they are conventional or GM, are at 75 and 100m of distance which proves once more that the Catalan Coexistence Law waiting for approval, that establishes 50m as the distance between conventional/organic and GM fields, is insufficient.

The farmer estimated a loss of at least 2.000 € minimum, which no-one will pay for, but he wants to make clear he doesn't blame the other farmers but the Catalan Government for this situation. Furthermore he is having problems with the other farmers in the village that don't understand why he made all this mess out of this.

This is one more of all the contamination cases that have been detected in Spain since 2001. Last summer Plataforma Transgènics Fora! and Assemblea Pagesa, with the collaboration of Greenpeace, carried out a study in the area of Lleida, in West Catalonia, and Aragó to detect other possible contamination cases. Of the 10 fields analysed looking for cross-pollination (5 conventional and 5 organic) 6 came out to be contaminated. This study will be presented internationally the 4<sup>th</sup> of April in Barcelona and Viena.

This case proves once more that coexistence is impossible, thus we will accept no distances and no coexistence laws. At the moment the national Coexistence Law has been stopped in Madrid as well as the Catalan Law, which was stopped by social mobilisation and is pendent of approval since March 2005. We are now starting a local social-based and GMO-free campaign in Catalonia, although the difficulties of having 17.000 GM maize hectares on our fields.

Working towards a GMO-free Catalonia!  
No GMOs on our plates or on our fields

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