

2008 GMO free – somehow or other!

Nearly every week we hear about scandals of *unauthorised gmo* (genetically modified organisms) crops appearing in European charges or of *sleaze* between responsible governmental departments, EU institutions and the industry. At the same time we hear devastating news from those countries where the growth of genetically modified organisms is already proceeded: *hunger* is growing, *monocroping* destroys the rain forest, makes farmland desolate and the *amount of pesticides increases*, farmers are dispelled from their land or commit suicide.

Politicians and economy up to now haven't acted reliably against these *profitdriven developments*. But civil resistance against agri-biotechnology is rising. After only a few activities of „field liberation“ and sabotage, resistance spread in 2006 and 2007 with a current point of culmination in 2008.

It all started with a few resolute people who created the slogan „*2008 wird gentechnikfrei – so oder so!*“ (2008 GMO free – somehow or other!) and published a newspaper containing their ideas and reasons.

As a first action at January 1st in 2008 they climbed the house front of the *Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety in Berlin* (Mauerstr.) and put up the banner saying „*2008 wird gentechnikfrei –*

so oder so!“ (s. left) At the same day they organised some street theater and distributed the newspaper.

In Gross-Luesewitz, near Rostock, was put up a banner at the smokestack of the „*Agrobiotechnikum*“, stating the same slogan. The „*Agrobiotechnikum*“ shelters many agri-biotechnology companies. The bundled research in agri-biotechnology including outdoor tests they do there, make Gross-Lüesewitz a center for the implementation of GMOs. In 2007 some activists failed only closely to squat a field of „cholera-potatoes“ there.

January 2nd they organised a *demonstration* „Unter den Linden“ (a highly symbolic street in Berlin, s. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unter_den_Linden), but the participants „disseminated“ like the pollen of genetically modified plants to do their own actions, amongst others the clown rebel army and a choir. Also an „*Agency for the Abolishment of GMOs*“ was erected in front of the *Federal Association of German Plantbreeders* (Reinhardtstr. 27a, 10117 Berlin; after a squatting didn't succeed). Police investigations took place.

1. No barley in Giessen (middle of Germany)

Prof. Kogel (Justus Liebig University Giessen) claims to research the *interaction between the plants and soil fungi* in the ground. The project is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research as „*biosafety research*“. The scientists are supposed to look for possible negative effects of GMOs (genetically modified organisms) on the environment, especially on symbiotic soil fungi. Already in the second year of the outdoor test prof. Kogel proclaimed that they didn't find any negative effects, although German Good Scientific Practice prescribes three years of research and the experiment was partly destroyed two years in a row and was squatted the third year..!

The barley plants also contain *two more genetic modifications*: one for improved brewing quality and one to use it as chickenfeed.

tions, unnessecary for „biosafety research“, are of no importance and are just contained in the plants because they were bred this way at Washington State University, where the German scientists got them from.

The university of Gießen is trying to establish its international position in agricultures with risky and forward-pressing agri-biotechnology. Thus the squatting of this field is a symbol against the false propaganda of biosafety research and the so-called „independent“ science.

Prof. Kogel claims that these two modifica-

Actions against the barley field

2006 some people *announced to destroy the field* at a certain weekend and although police was at the site they managed to destroy about 20% of the 12 qm-field. In august 2008 two of them will be brought to court. These two are very well prepared and will try to rather accuse the investigator and agri-biotechnology in general (s. the flyers).

2007 unknown persons *destroyed the field again* although there were watchmen and a dog and a 2 m fence around it.

2008 some people decided not to wait until the barley grew but *squatted the field* at the end of march. They erected a *tripod* of 10 m-tree trunks. In the top of it people could chain themselves, so that the tripod couldn't get removed easily. For the same pupose *a concrete block* of 600 kg weight was placed under the tripod, and it too contained holes to chain people to it. Signs around the field announced a gmo-free zone and an open field.

The university's president stated that they hadn't intended to use the field in 2008 anyway, which was very unlikely, but because of the presence of the sqatters they didn't have the chance, either.

With this kind of action people connected to a *successful tradition in resistance against GMOs* of the 1990s. Many GMO fields in Germany were squatted for years. The squats raised great attention in the affected areas and most of the local population solidarized with the squatters. And they were successful: from 1998 to 2004 a europe-wide moratorium (GMO-stopp) was established. In 2004 the USA sued Europe successfully at the WTO (World Trade Organization) for the ban of GMO-imports. Since then this squat was the first successful one and the first in a series of up to now six further squattings.

After three weeks the university announced to quit the outdoor test. Also in march another outdoor field of the university close to Marburg (MON810 corn) was quit because of the population's protest. So there was only one university field left over. The squatters removed all their stuff from the barley field, also the concrete block. Just the tripod remained warning on the scene... to appear one week later on the last GMO field in Hesse: Gross-Gerau (s. poster no. 7)

2. No MON810-corn in Oberboihingen southern Germany

Four days after the squatting in Giessen we heard of another squatted field: it was also a university field, prepared by prof. Schier of the *University of Economy and Environment* of Nürtingen-Geislingen for a comparison between genetically modified (gm) corn (MON810) and non-gmo corn. It is symptomatic for some university scientists to do research for Monsanto, in this case the investigator even openly admits to get expenses from „one of the most hated companies in the world“. *Independent research got very seldom at German universities.* After the field had been destroyed two times, this year it was time for not even letting the seed into the ground.

Here also a *12 m tripod* was built up and a *barrel filled with concrete* was placed on the acre to chain people to them. In the early morning policesurrounded the field until the university decided for a de-escalation strategy. From the local media we got to know that the university board was rather against the gmo research and trying to keep prof. Schier from the exertion.

So in this pacified situation a *bike rallye track* was dugged around the tripod (also to prevent heavy machines from reaching the activists ;-), the free kitchen from a nearby town supplied us with yummy

food. The high tripod and a *circus tent* formed gaudy spots in the countryside. Also the *encouragement and support by the local population*, e.g. farmers, was amazing: they brought food, straw, wood for the campfire and to lay on the ground etc. After the first day of bright sunshine the following days it rained heavily up to snow which nearly destroyed the tents. It was very muddy but with the help of the people we managed everything.

In an open letter we demanded the university to give up the outdoor tests or otherwise we would stay until they couldn't sow the corn any more. And although the university board stated they couldn't forbid prof. Schier's work because he acted according to the law, they obviously finally managed to „convince“ him. Because one week after our „move in“ they announced to quit the outdoor tests for the next five years! An older local activist was present at the publication and asked seemingly concerned, why it took the university 12 years for this decision... We stayed until the next weekend to finish our successful action with a big celebration.

3. Sugar-beets in Northeim (middle of Germany)

Close to Goettingen the seed company KWS Saat AG planned to plant out genetically modified (gm) sugar beets, which they developed in collaboration with Monsanto to be resistant to the Monsanto pesticide „Roundup Ready“. Even the city council of Northeim was against this project and adopted a resolution, but of course, resolutions seldom help.

So in the early morning of April 12th, the day after a demonstration by bike against agri-biotechnology, a group of about 15 people squatted the field simply with tents. They were mostly students of the nearby university for organic farming, farmers and gardeners. The obligatory tripod arose here not until the fourth day of the squatting! Already in 1998 the squatting of an KWS outdoor test field managed to prevent it. But this time it turned out differently.

After 17 days the KWS gathered their employees from all over Germany in six overland

buses and 20 cars to form a counter-demonstration against the squatting. The 450 employees built a circle around the field, „shutting out“ the squatters, to enable the sowing of the sugar beets in their midst. The squatters couldn't do much else than repeating their reasons for the squatting and planting flowers and horticultural crop around the human wall.