

CUSCO, REGION LIBRE DE TRANSGENICOS

Open Letter from the Communities of Cusco to:

- **Organizers of the International Technical Conference on Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and**
- **Peruvian Representatives to the International Technical Conference**

Calling upon the Solidarity of the International Community

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) calls attention to member states to make greater efforts in favor of the conservation of biodiversity, agrobiodiversity and the protection of cultures and knowledge of the indigenous peoples who are recognized for their valuable contributions to the food and health of humanity, for being the domesticators, breeders and guardians of the most important diversity of crops and animals.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety of the CBD is an international instrument that seeks to regulate the international flow and movement, as well as possible adverse effects of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) or transgenic organisms.

The Regional Government of Cusco – Peru, indigenous and farmers’ organizations and guilds, women’s and students groups, research institutions, as well as non-government organizations and other members of civil society, in the face of the FAO International Technical Conference on Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries, meeting in the city of Guadalajara Mexico, sponsored by, among others, international biotechnology corporations who promote the production of transgenic seeds (GMOs), we declare the following:

CONSIDERING:

1. That, Peru is one of the eight centers of global mega diversity and is the center of origin and domestication of 162 species of important cultivars for food and agriculture. In this landscape, Cusco is the center of origin and diversity of potatoes and other important crops, which for more than 10,000 years have been nurtured by our originating cultures, within a ritual agriculture that has made possible a sustainable base of genetic diversity and variability of native crops.

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2. That, the Regional Government of Cusco, has enacted the Regional Ordinance N° 010-2007-CR/GRC, legal instrument that declares the Cusco Region Free of Transgenics, in which the introduction, cultivation, manipulation, storage, research, conservation, exchange, confined use and commercialization of genetically modified organisms GMOs is prohibited, for being considered a grave threat for regional food security, comprising the genetic and economic heritage of our region and for putting in risk the values of the indigenous cosmovision.
3. That, interested in the International Technical Conference on Agricultural Biotechnology in Developing Countries, planned for the 1 – 4 March of 2010 in Guadalajara, Mexico and sponsored by the FAO, we have revised the technical documents prepared for this occasion. These documents leave clear that the FAO ignores the needs and potential that traditional organic agriculture has for small-scale farmers and instead privileges the mass use of modern technology based on GMOs. This technology is concentrated in the hands of powerful international biotechnology and petrochemical corporations, which have a monopoly on 50% of the world's seeds, of which commerce reaches 38 billion dollars annually and yet, whose touted results are scientifically and technologically unproven.
4. That, the International Assessment of Agriculture Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), concludes that rural development problems are not only the result of low yields and lack of productivity, but rather that the conditions associated with food quality, environmental sustainability, access to water, land tenure, and use of alternative energy sources are key elements to the solution. The IAASTD recognizes the rights and needs of small-scale farmers, women farmers and those who suffer from hunger. The assessment also recognizes that the cause and persistence of poverty are associated to power relations and the unequal distribution of resources. The aforementioned document proposes solutions for agriculture, poverty alleviation and development that the FAO should implement.
5. That, it is an insult to the people of Mexico that the Technical Conference of the FAO is being held in the center of origin of maize (corn), biocultural heritage of global importance, during the International Year of Biodiversity, which should be celebrated for its concept of protection, promotion, valorization and development of our cultural and biological diversity.

The signing institutions, united in an open, participatory and democratic forum without

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hidden agendas:

WE DECLARE THE FOLLOWING:

1. The FAO must set forth their position to the international community, clearly, expressly and unequivocally against genetically modified organisms, strongly promoted by determined business groups with global reach.
2. The FAO must immediately implement the recommendations of the IAASTD.
3. The communities of Cusco reject the agreements of the Technical Conference, sponsored by the FAO, for closing the door and only collaborating with the participation of representatives that have demonstrated to respond to the interests of economic power and support of international agroindustrial corporations and sectors closely linked with the promotion of agricultural biotechnology (understood in this case as genetic engineering) and for acting contrary to the interests of the Cusco community and the small-scale and indigenous farmers of the world who on repeated opportunities have questioned and rejected the promotion of genetic engineering and specifically genetically modified organisms. The FAO is ignoring the interests and the voices of the world's poor and small-scale farmers.
4. The FAO must take into consideration that, for indigenous and farming communities, seed diversity is critical for sustainable agriculture, climate change mitigation and adaptation processes, and for the dignity and food sovereignty of the communities. Ecological agriculture and our traditional practices can contribute to the eradication of hunger in the world.

THEREFORE:

5. We call upon all States participating in this conference to comply with their promises to create formulas and alternatives that ensure food security and sovereignty and nutrition, with the free and informed participation of small-scale farmers. We are convinced that the supply of ecological foods can feed the great majority of people in the world, in rural as well as urban zones.
6. We call for a reorientation of research and the recognition and application of our communities' traditional knowledge, practices and systems of innovation supported by participatory methods, which manifest the potential our ecological model of food production and supply.
7. We express solidarity with the farmers, indigenous and professional organizations

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throughout the world that also have voiced their protest against this new season of GMO promotion and from Cusco call for a global moratorium on GMOs and for uniting efforts to adequately protect and regulate local and national food markets, preserving biodiversity, agrobiodiversity and ancestral cultures of indigenous and farming communities of the world.

Cusco 25 February 2010

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