

The Pillnitz Declaration of 31st August 2008

On 30th and 31st August 2008 the expert and information conference „BIOFRUIT OHNE GENTECH“ was held in Dresden-Pillnitz, an acknowledged area of fruit cultivation and breeding research. The conference was organized simultaneously with the international symposium “BIOTECHFRUIT2008” taking place from 1st to 5th September 2008 in Pillnitz as well. After the end of the discussions between scientists, representatives of associations, politicians, interested citizens, producers and consumers the signers declare:

We first state

that freedom and independence of scientific research are substantial elements of our culture. In case of risks for the stability of our ecosystems and the global social systems scientists bear a particular high responsibility for their research and the use made of their results.

We state that genetic engineering of cultivated plants has already left the closed area of scientific research and has become a globally spread technology even though the scientific and political debate on the advantages and disadvantages as well as the risks of genetic engineering on plants is not finished at all. We state that GM plants have been released and that GMO companies are planning to push through this process globally and irreversibly.

Europe is facing fundamental decisions since with regard to the wishes of the consumers there are still real chances to restrict the unhindered spread of genetic engineering in agriculture.

We further state that numerous promised advantages of genetic engineering in agriculture have not been realized:

GM plants neither provide a significantly higher production able to contribute to overcome the global nutrition problems nor do they lead to a permanent reduction of chemicals used to fight diseases and pest.

Instead we observe:

- existence-threatening increase of the farmers' economic dependence on suppliers of seeds and chemicals in other parts of the world, in particular by the introduction of patents on life;
- massive effects on other organisms, in particular bees, other insects and micro-organisms;
- increasing monoculture and reduction of biodiversity;
- insufficient use and further development of existing alternative cultivation and breeding methods allowing to prevent diseases on cultivated plants and to reduce damage;
- untenable increase of expenditure and expenses for residue tests of agricultural products in order to secure that food is GMO free; so far unsolved legal, liability and insurance problems concerning release and cultivation of GM plants and products;
- endangerment of whole product chains, for example in case of honey, since the distance regulations are insufficient;

We state that coexistence of GMO free and GMO using cultivation methods is not possible on the long run and the consumers' freedom of choice is not granted.

Our appeal from Pillnitz:

We appeal to scientists for making a responsible use of their results and for resisting the pressure on either the political part (dependence of research funding) or the part of agro-industry.

We call upon our fellow citizens for a further consistent rejecting of the purchase and consumption of GM food, for claiming obligatory labelling rules for food, in the production of which any kind of genetic engineering has been used and for putting pressure on those responsible in politics to make them put into practice most people's rejecting of genetic engineering.

Our demands to politicians and decision-makers are:

- creation of an independent safety research for procedures and techniques of genetic engineering;
- revision of the criteria for the assignment of public research funds;
- transparency of genetic engineering research funding in agriculture;
- concentration on conventional breeding, since genetic engineering is no alternative;
- no public funds for GM breeding and for market launch of GM products;
- unambiguous assignment of consequential costs to causers cultivating or circulating GM products and clear liability rules getting effective in case of damage;
- political and legal support of GMO free cultivation areas and farms;
- complete information, long-term monitoring and far-reaching transparency as well as participation of citizens in all procedures;
- effective measures allowing permanent production of natural honey free from traces of genetic engineering;
- no further release of GMOs;
- cancelling of licences for cultivating GM plants

As a result, we consent to the demand of the International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside (ICPPC) for a moratorium regarding the cultivation of GM plants in Europe until sufficient knowledge about side-effects is available. There is no necessity or time pressure to permit a further spread of GM plants in Europe.

In particular for Pillnitz we claim not to allow the release of GM fruit varieties. After the introduction of GM plants used for raw material, energy, animal feed and staple food a new group of plants, i. e. fruit, must be protected from genetic engineering.

The breeding goals in fruit cultivation can also be achieved by classical methods – without the risks and side-effects of genetic engineering. For the development of fruit varieties being ecologically cultivable and disease-resistant it is also necessary that the attention of science is drawn again on the genetic diversity of old fruit varieties. Many of them are much more resistant to disease and pest than those prevailing in fruit cultivation today. In this context there is an urgent necessity to increase the public conservation efforts and to support them financially in an appropriate way. We expect the Fruit Gene Bank of Dresden-Pillnitz to assume an essential part on the local level as well as internationally.

The international reputation of Dresden-Pillnitz as an area of fruit cultivation where new varieties are being bred and old varieties are being conserved must not be put at risk by GMO experiments!