

Can Seeds Commit Suicide?

How "Terminator Technology" may change our food forever

Halifax, NS – November 9, 2005: "Suicide Seeds", "Terminator Technology", and "GURTS" seem to belong in a 'B rated' science fiction movie rather than your grocery aisles, but that is where they are headed if agrochemical industry gets their way. Even though Fear Factor's edible mysteries look totally disgusting, they pale in comparison to what the biotech giants would have you ingest.

Terminator Technology or technically termed Genetic Use Restriction Technology (GURTS) has been developed to produce genetically modified plants that render sterile seeds at harvest. This occurs by turning the gene for seed sterility or germination on or off with a chemical or other factor. These "suicide seeds" were created to prevent seed-saving and replanting harvested seed. Canada is one of 188 countries that have signed the UN Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) moratorium on the use and field experimentation of this technology, but in February Canada tried to overturn the *de facto* moratorium and as recently as October 11, 2005 the Canadian Government granted a GURTS patent to U.S. seed company Delta & Pine Land.

What the Canadian government does not seem to understand is that, although GURTS may pose as a saviour of the current food production system, riddled with Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) cross contamination, Terminator Technology poses serious consequences for Indigenous peoples, local communities, peasants and small-scale farmers. And in a province that loves our local Farmer's Markets, "suicide seeds" affect us all.

On Thursday, November 10th the Ecology Action Centre's Food Action Committee will be hosting award winning novelist and film-maker Anna Paskal of Inter Pares. Anna has travelled to Halifax to discuss Canada's role in banning Terminator Technology prior to the upcoming UN Convention on Biological Diversity in March 2006. Her talk is entitled "Terminator Seed Technology: Implications for Food Sovereignty in the South" and will be held at 7:30pm at The Khyber at 1588 Barrington Street.

Inter Pares is a Canadian organization dedicated to promoting international social justice. Inter Pares sits on the steering committee of the Canadian component of a new campaign called Ban Terminator (www.banterminator.org). Inter Pares has long been working in the areas of ecological agriculture, seed saving, agricultural biodiversity, and rural livelihood development. The Ecology Action Centre's Food Action Committee aims to promote the social, economic, and environmental benefits of locally-produced food; and to promote socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable ways of growing, processing, and distributing food.

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