



VUFO-NGO RESOURCE CENTRE

Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations – Non-Governmental Organizations

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Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Working Group (SANRM-WG)

PANEL DISCUSSION

on

“Genetic Engineering/GMO in Vietnam: Opportunities and Challenges“

Time: Friday, 11 January 2013, 14.00 – 17.00 hours

Venue: Room 7, La Thanh Hotel, 218 Doi Can Street, Hanoi

Background and Rationale

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are not new to Vietnam. The Prime Minister issued in 2006 the Decision No. 11/2006/QĐ-TTg, namely the “Programme for the development and application of biotechnology in agriculture and rural development up to 2020”. The programme aims to create new plant varieties, animal breeds, micro-organic strains and agricultural biotechnological preparations of high yields, high quality and economic efficiency. It has foreseen the completion of laboratory research and field trials for selected GM crops by 2010 and the planting of 30–50 percent of the country’s farmland by 2020. These are very ambitious plans. In reality however, Vietnam is still in the trial phase and the MARD has only recently approved another field research on Syngenta’s GM corn MIR 162, a genetically modified corn resistant to Lepidoptera insects.

GMO crops may lead to higher yields and resistance to drought, saline water, pests and herbicides. But the widespread introduction of GMO seeds, which are commercialized by large multinational companies, can also jeopardize the nation’s food sovereignty by creating dependence of the farmers towards the products of these firms. There are evidences from other countries that initial higher yields cannot be sustained over longer periods of time without implementing highly developed water management regimes, adequate supply of nutrients and sophisticated weed and insect controlling measures; conditions which are still a challenge in many countries, and specifically to farmer producers. In addition, the long-term consequences of introducing GE/GMO are not entirely known and continuously need to be investigated scientifically.

At a time when Vietnam is still in an initial and experimental stage, the SANRM-WG sees the need for more and transparent in-country research and independent evaluations about Vietnam’s conditions and needs, including national and international market trends. In addition, a healthy and informed debate is needed among all the stakeholders as well as among the wider public. It is in this light that the WG SANRM invites the public to the above mentioned panel discussion and hopes for a constructive and fruitful contribution to the debate.

Objectives:

- Learning and sharing about the situation of GE/GMO in Vietnam and globally
- Creating awareness about the advantages and disadvantages of GE food and GMO crops
- Sharing perspectives/opinions on GE/GMO among target groups like policy makers, scientists, INGO, VN NGO, media and the public

Panel Discussants:

- n.n. - presenting an overview about the status of GMO introduction to Vietnam.
- Ass. Prof. Dr. Ngo Xuan Binh (Head Biotechnology Department, College of Agriculture and Forestry, Thai Nguyen University) - exploring the opportunities of GMO.
- Dr. Dao The Anh (Centre for Agrarian System Research and Development) - elaborating the challenges.
- Dr. Vandana Shiva (Founder and Director of Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, and of *Navdanya*, India) - looking at the international dimension of the topic.

Questions to the panelists:

- 1) Policy overview. Status of implementation. Economic considerations. Future perspectives.
- 2) Crops involved. Potential yields and conditions. Marketing. Who owns the process?
- 3) Long-term effects (health, economics, biodiversity, food/seed sovereignty), use of herbicides/pesticides.
- 4) Indian and international perspective.

Programme:

Time	Content	Presenter
14.00 - 14.15	Opening remarks	Eduardo A. Sabio Chair, SANRM-WG Regional Representative, VECO
14.15 - 14.35	Opportunities of GE agriculture	Ass. Prof Ngo Xuan Binh Head Biotechnology Department, College of Agriculture and Forestry, Thai Nguyen University
14.35 - 14.55	Challenges of GE agriculture	Dr. Dao The Anh Agro-Economist, Director, CASRAD
14.55 - 15.15	The international dimension and experience from India	Dr. Vandana Shiva, India Founder and Director of Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, and of <i>Navdanya</i>
15.15 - 15.45	Discussion among panelists	Moderator
15.45 - 16.00	Tea break	
16.00 - 16.10	Summary of discussion	Moderator
16.10 - 16.50	Open discussion, Q & A, including auditorium	Moderator
16.50 -17.00	Closing remarks	Jan Papendieck Regional Representative Bread for the World