

Food for Healthy People Not for Healthy Profits!

Genetic engineering has come upon the world rapidly, accompanied by the usual claims by the mega agricultural corporations that this is a way of feeding the poor of the earth and making the world a better place. However, these claims need to be examined in the light of what has actually been done to date, and what is planned for the future. The reality is that the health of their profit margins is far more important to them than the health of society and the environment. Furthermore, in their pursuit to control the world's agriculture, they throw the norms of safe science out the window.

Neither Monsanto, Cargill, nor any of the other genetic engineering companies are developing genetically engineered crops that might truly solve global food shortages. Quite the opposite. If genetically engineered crops were aimed at feeding the hungry, Monsanto and the others would be developing seeds with these characteristics:

- (a) ability to grow on substandard or marginal soils;
- (b) plants able to produce more high-quality protein, with increased per-acre yield, without increasing the need for expensive machinery, chemicals, fertilizers, or water;
- (c) they would aim to favor small farms over larger farms;
- (d) the seeds would be cheap and freely available without restrictive licensing; and
- (e) they would be for crops that feed people, not meat-producing animals.

The potential for genetically modified foods to actually improve the world is enormous. But under capitalism, they can only play a harmful role. The production of food for profit leads to all kinds of low-cost, high-profit maneuvers, with the health of humanity and the earth damned as a consequence.

A recent bill in the Senate that would have allowed individual states to label GMO products was defeated by a vote of 71-27, with a majority of Democrats voting against. Although labeling alone would far from resolve the fundamental problem, this example shows just how entrenched and powerful these corporations are, and the real role played by the so-called "worker-friendly" Democrats. Both major parties are bought by Monsanto and other huge corporations. Workers need to organize themselves in a mass party that would take a stand against these mega corporations—a labor party. The labor movement has the resources, real-world social networks, and organizing experience to build such a party. Millions of unorganized workers would be enthused by such a development. But in order to fight the greed and recklessness of corporations like Monsanto and Cargill, a labor party would have to fight for a socialist plan for agriculture.

This is why we call for the nationalization of the food distribution and agrichemical giants, to be run under democratic workers' control. These companies destroy farmers' livelihoods and endanger public health in the pursuit of profit. A democratic plan of food production would protect small farmers' and agricultural workers' jobs and security. We are also in favor of fully funding nutrition assistance and extension programs, and for full union rights for all agricultural workers. We believe the economy should be run on a sustainable, democratic basis, with the majority in society having a direct say in what and how things are produced.

If you agree with this perspective, contact the Workers International League and join the struggle for socialism!



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