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Anti-GMO activists on Trial

Deliberate attempt to criminalise opposition to GMOs in Belgium



In Spring 2011, a few hundred activists from the Field Liberation Movement that opposes GMO crops interfered with an outdoor field experimental trial by uprooting "mold resistant" GMO potatoes and replacing them with conventional and organic resistant varieties of potatoes. This activity of civil disobedience aimed at highlighting the dangers of releasing GMOs into the environment and the lack of scientific research on alternative sustainable agriculture, as well as echoing widespread public opposition to GMOs. Eleven of the activists were handpicked by police and have been charged with conspiracy, assault and injury and vandalism, a blatant demonstration of willingness to crush opposition to GMOs. However, tens of citizens, who had either participated in the great potato swap or agree with it declared themselves "voluntary defendants" and asked to be judged also. The Greens/EFA group in the EP has accompanied the Field Liberation Movement in its struggle for a GMO-free Europe. For Green MEPs José Bové, who has been at the heart of the French "faucheurs volontaires", and Bart Staes, who was a voluntary defendant at the trial, it was at last time for a trial on GMOs and their socio-economic, environmental and health consequences as well as the kind of agriculture and society it entails. Alas, the severity of the tribunal was confirmed yesterday when the judge rejected altogether the request from the voluntary defendants to be judged, the witnesses and video testimonies that were called in by the defendants and a video of the potato swap activity, leaving no choice for the 11 charged and their lawyer but to leave the tribunal. Hearing only the accusation, the tribunal handed down severe suspended and direct jail sentences up to 8 months. The judgement will be delivered on the 12th February. If these sentences are confirmed, the opponents will contest it under Belgian law, and we will be with them. Despite the deliberate threats of harsh penalties for civil disobedience activities, resistance to GMOs will continue in Belgium and Europe.

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Responsible MEPs



José Bové

Member



Bart Staes

Member

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