Young seedling © Meriel Jane Waissman

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Event | 29.01.2014

Seed diversity and food security threatened by an overly concentrated EU seed market

Greens/EFA conference

CONFERENCE DOCUMENTATION

- **Watch the press conference video recording (10:30 - 11:00)**

- **Watch the recorded video stream**
- **Study "Concentration of market power in the EU seed market"**

PRESENTATION

This conference is held as part of the Greens/EFA campaign for Seed Freedom and Food security, in a context where the European Commission (EC) proposal on seed production and marketing regulation, currently being discussed in the EP, is being increasingly criticized not only by civil society but also throughout all political groups. A study presented at this conference de-bunks the myth presented by the European Seed Association (ESA) and the EC that the European seed market is very diversified. The event will highlight the question of the already existing market concentration in the EU seed market and the dominance of a small group of multinational companies in the EU seed market. Therefore, the proposed regulation of the EC is based on false assumptions and benefits the seed lobby and giant seed companies. The Greens/EFA group in the EP takes the opportunity of this conference to present its latest study on 'Concentration of market power in the EU seed market'. The study points out that industry's monopoly supporting the mantra that the EU market is healthy and diversified, with some 7000 mainly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), is misleading. Notably, in the absence of freely available data and independently verifiable statistics, the EC is forced to rely upon industry statistics and further promotes the industry myth. This allows the corporations to dominate the narrative and manipulate the arguments to the general public on what is in their best interest. Furthermore, the EU market is well integrated in a globalised market, where arms of global corporations use worldwide networks to obtain, breed, multiply and distribute their seed; with the result that the biggest 10 companies own up to 75% of the worldwide market share. With such a concentrated EU and global market increasingly dominated by only a few major players, the background context is a steady decline in agro-biodiversity, a vital part for our long term food security and to adapt around challenges like climate change. We also see breeding moving out of the hands of the users, the farmers who for many centuries have adapted seed to their own local, environmental and

climatic needs, and instead innovation is being reserved only for the corporations, who are intent on promoting and providing for a market of industrial scale production, with tailor-made dependency on agrochemicals. Given the importance of the issue, we call for EU institutions to provide better tools in order to reverse the concentration phenomenon, by recognising the issue rather than citing statistics provided by the industrial lobby. The conference will start with the presentation of the Greens/EFA study followed by a roundtable of reactions by speakers from diverse backgrounds: academic, civil society and representative of the European Commission. A debate with the public will follow.

DRAFT PROGRAMME

*15:00-15:30****Opening and presentation of study***

- Opening by **Martin Häusling**, Greens/EFA MEP, Coordinator of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
- Presentation of the study, **Hannes Lorenzen**, Greens/EFA Adviser on Agriculture and Rural development

15:30-16:30
Round of reactions by guest speakers

- **Philip H. Howard**, Associate Professor Department of Community Sustainability ,Michigan State University: The American example not to follow
- **Nina Holland**, Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO): The power of the agrochemical seed companies in the EU
- **Antje Kölling** - IFOAM: How do the EC legislative proposals would increase market concentration in EU?
- **Dr. Arjen de Vos** , research&development TS Agri : importance of independent breeding, a case study : potatoes for salty grounds (www.ts-agri.com)
- **Dr. Les Levidov**, The Open University UK : The EU research agenda for agriculture

Moderation by **Bart Staes**, Greens/EFA MEP, Committee on Environment, Health and Food Safety
16:30-18:00
Debate *18:00-18:30*
Conclusion by **José Bové**, Greens/EFA MEP, Vice-President of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

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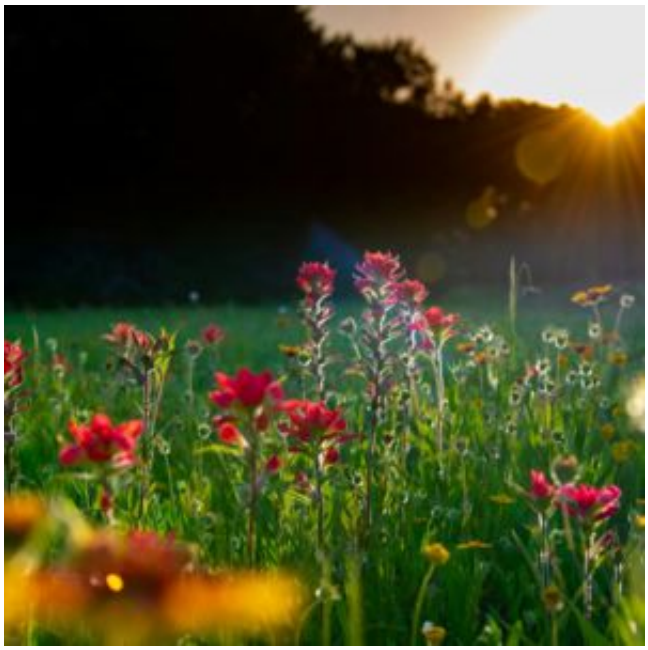

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