



“European Patent Office: Hands off our food plants!”

Conventional breeding has to be kept free from patent claims

27 March 2019 / Today, equipped with a three-metre-high melon, representatives from organisations actively engaged in agriculture, development aid, food production and environmental protection will be holding a public protest at the EPO in Munich. The reason: despite a prohibition on granting patents on conventional breeding, the EPO has nevertheless granted patents on melons, tomatoes, onions, lettuce, garden parsley, cucumber and even daisy flowers, all produced without using methods of genetic engineering. At the same time, oppositions against patents on barley were rejected. Today, the Administrative Council that represents the 38 contracting states of the EPO will meet. The assembly is requested to take measures to ensure that prohibitions are effective.

“The EPO is wholly structured towards serving the interests of industry and patent attorneys. The interests of broader public are mostly ignored. By introducing more and more loopholes, the political decision-making and legal prohibitions are circumvented,” says Johanna Eckhardt of *No Patents on Seeds!*. “If the Administrative Council does not succeed in effectively enforcing the existing prohibitions, the law itself has to be changed. The conventional breeding of plants and animals has to be kept free from patent claims.”

In June 2017, after public protests, the Administrative Council together with backup from EU institutions, already took a decision to prohibit patents on plants and animals that are not derived from techniques of genetic engineering. However, in December 2018, the Technical Board of the EPO decided that the decision of the Administrative Council would not be legally binding. Therefore, from the beginning of 2019, much higher numbers of these patents could be granted.

Consequently, there is a legally chaotic situation at the EPO: the Administrative Council decision is neither legally enforceable nor sufficient. This situation is especially advantageous to large companies, such as Bayer (Monsanto), Syngenta and BASF, who are aiming to monopolise seeds and plants and thereby take control of basic resources for producing our daily food. Some of these companies are even demanding that patents that were revoked are now reinstated.

The call for public demonstration is supported by: Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL), ARCHE NOAH - Gesellschaft zur Erhaltung der Kulturpflanzenvielfalt und ihre Entwicklung, agu – Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Umweltbeauftragten der Gliedkirchen der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, BUND Naturschutz in Bayern e.V., Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND), Bundesverband Deutscher Milchviehhalter, Campact!, Die Freien Bäcker, EDL – Evangelischer Dienst auf dem Lande, FIAN, Gää e.V.- Vereinigung ökologischer Landbau, Gen-ethisches Netzwerk, Genussgemeinschaft Städter und Bauern e.V., Gesellschaft für ökologische Forschung, IG Nachbau – Gegen Nachbau-Gebühren, IG Saatgut, Katholische Landvolkbewegung Deutschland (KLB), Kein Patent auf Leben!, Keine Patente auf Saatgut!, Kultursaat e.V., Sambucus e.V., Verband Katholisches Landvolk (VKL), Plataforma Transgénicos Fora, ProSpecieRara, Save our Seeds!, Slow Food München, SWISSAID, Umweltinstitut München, WeMove Europe.

Contact:

- Christoph Then, Spokesperson for „No patents on seeds!”, info@no-patents-on-seeds.org, +49 151 54638040
- Johanna Eckhardt, Project coordination for „No patents on seeds!”, johanna.eckhardt@no-patents-on-seeds.org, + 43 680 2126343

For the media: there will be the opportunity to access pictures taken by *No Patents on Seeds!*.

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