

Genetically Modified Seeds: Terminator Rejection - A Victory for the People

By [Greenpeace and Via Campesina](#)

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CONTACT: Greenpeace

Benedikt Haerlin, Greenpeace International +55 41 9677 1859 Francisca Rodriguez, Via Campesina +55 41 8429 2970 Pat Mooney, Ban Terminator Campaign +55 41 8833 0437

Terminator Rejection - A Victory for the People

CURITIBA, Brazil – March 24 – A broad coalition of peasant farmers, indigenous peoples and civil society today celebrated the firm rejection of efforts to undermine the global moratorium on Terminator technologies – genetically engineered sterile seeds – at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Curitiba, Brazil.

“This is a momentous day for the 1.4 billion poor people worldwide, who depend on farmer saved seeds,” said Francisca Rodriguez of Via Campesina, a world wide movement of peasant farmers, “Terminator seeds are a weapon of mass destruction and an assault on our food sovereignty.”

“Terminator directly threatens our life, our culture and our identity as indigenous peoples”, said Viviana Figueroa of the Ocumazo indigenous community in Argentina, on behalf of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity.

“Today’s decision is a huge step forward for the Brazilian Campaign against GMOs,” said Maria Rita Reis from the Brazilian Forum of Social movements and NGOs, “This reaffirms Brazil’s existing ban on Terminator. It sends a clear message to the national government and congress that the world supports a ban on Terminator.”

“Common sense has prevailed – lifting the Moratorium on the Terminator seeds would have been suicidal – literally,” said Greenpeace International’s Benedikt Haerlin from the Convention meeting. “This is a genuine victory for civil society around the world – it will go a long way to ensuring that biodiversity, food security and the livelihoods of millions of farmers worldwide are protected.”

Terminators, or GURTS (Genetic Use Restriction Technologies), are a class of genetic engineering technologies which allow companies to introduce seeds whose sterile offspring cannot reproduce, preventing farmers from re-planting seeds from their harvest. The seeds could also be used to introduce specific traits which would only be triggered by the application of proprietary chemicals by the same companies.

At the CBD Australia, Canada and New Zealand along with the US government (not a party to the CBD) and a number of biotech companies were leading attempts to open the door to field testing of Terminator seeds by insisting on a 'case by case' assessment of such technologies. This text was unanimously rejected today in the CBD's working group dealing with the issue and still needs to be formally adopted by the plenary of the CBD.

"Despite today's victory, there is no doubt that the multinational biotech industry will continue to push sterile seed technology," said Pat Mooney of the Ban Terminator Campaign. "Terminator will rear its ugly head at the next UN CBD meeting in 2008. The only solution is a total ban on the technology once and for all," he concluded.

Greenpeace is an independent, campaigning organisation which uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems, and to force solutions essential to a green and peaceful future.

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