

The March Against Monsanto is On: The Non-GMO Revolution and the Battle against the “Big 6” GMO Corporations

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On May 21st the ‘March against Monsanto’ takes place around the world including Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, the U.S., Canada, Australia, Japan, Mexico and several countries in Europe and Africa are joining the fight against the GMO giant. There is positive news on the battle against Western corporations that produce and sell Genetically Modified Organisms or “GMO” foods.

Recent trends suggest that the world is becoming more health conscious when it comes to their food supply. For example, for Coca-Cola “sales fell for the fourth straight quarter as demand for its fizzy drinks declined in Europe” and that “Coke and rival PepsiCo PEP -0.80% Inc have been hurt as consumers increasingly turn health-conscious, cutting back on fizzy drinks and turning to teas, fruit juices and smoothies” according to Reuters last month. The Associated Press (AP) reported in 2015 that McDonalds, an American name brand company that sells pure junk food experienced a 2.6% drop in sales worldwide:

The world’s biggest hamburger chain said Wednesday global sales declined 2.3% at established locations during the first three months of the year. That included a 2.6% drop in the US, where it is facing changing tastes and tougher competition. Already this year, McDonald’s has announced a number of changes in the US including a simplified grilled chicken recipe, curbing the use of antibiotics in chicken, and a pay bump and vacation time for workers at company-owned stores amid ongoing protests over its treatment of workers

Another bright spot in the battle against GMO foods is that fast food consumption by children at least in the U.S. is also in decline. *Reuters* reported in 2015 that children are eating “less” fast food:

Between 2003 and 2010, the number of U.S. kids eating fast food on any given day went down, and the calories from some types of fast foods have declined as well, according to a new study.

“Most prior studies have focused on menu items, but this (one) actually looked at what children are eating,” said coauthor Colin D. Rehm, formerly of the University of Washington in Seattle and now of Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. “The take-home message is that changes can be made, whether they are due to consumer preference or due to what the restaurants have done themselves,” Rehm told Reuters Health by phone. “It shows that change is possible”

Attitudes towards fast food chains and unhealthy products such as Coca-Cola and McDonalds have changed significantly. That is a positive change for human consumption but a negative for the McDonald's Corporation, Coca-Cola, Monsanto and other GMO corporations. Can the trend continue?

Alexia Foods, a ConAgra food brand announced that they too will become Non-GMO project verified and *"that all of the brand's offerings will be non-GMO by the end of 2016"* according to their Press Release. Several other food companies are also moving towards Non-GMO products according to www.non-gmoreport.com:

Del Monte Foods, Nestlé, and Dannon recently became the latest major food companies to replace genetically modified ingredients with non-GMO alternatives. Del Monte, one of the nation's largest producers of branded food products, announced plans for an increase in non-GMO product offerings and conversion to non-BPA packaging. Nestlé Dreyer's Ice Cream, the largest ice cream maker in the world, announced that it would remove GMO ingredients, high fructose corn syrup, and artificial colors and flavors in its ice cream products, including Dreyer's, Häagen-Dazs®, Outshine®, Skinny Cow®, Nestlé® Ice Cream and Nestlé® Drumstick®. Dannon, the U.S.'s leading yogurt maker, pledged to using more non-GMO ingredients in its products, transitioning to non-GMO feed for its dairy cows, and labeling products containing GMO ingredients

How far these food companies will go, still remains to be seen. But the discussion on the importance of producing healthy, Non-GMO food by these companies is an important first step.

Russia Aims to Become Largest Non-GMO Exporter

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced his intent on Russia becoming the largest exporter of Non-GMO food in the world to the members of the parliament in his December 2015 *'Russian state of the nation'* speech:

Our agriculture sector is a positive example. Just a decade ago we imported almost half of our food products and critically depended on imports, whereas now Russia has joined the exporters' club. Last year Russia's agricultural exports totaled almost \$20 billion. This is a quarter more than our proceeds from arms sales or about one third of our profits from gas exports. Our agriculture has made this leap in a short but productive period. Many thanks to our rural residents.

I believe we should set a national goal — fully provide the internal market with domestically produced foods by 2020. We are capable of feeding ourselves from our own land, and importantly, we have the water resources. Russia can become one of the world's largest suppliers of healthy, ecologically clean quality foods that some Western companies have stopped producing long ago, all the more so since global demand for such products continues to grow

Putin mentioned that the *"millions of hectares of arable land"* should be used by farmers who are interested in cultivating the land. In other words, make farming an attractive profession that produces healthy food for the Russian population and the world:

It is necessary to put to use millions of hectares of arable land that is now idle. They belong to large land owners, many of whom show little interest in farming. How many years have we been talking about this? Yet things are not moving forward. I suggest withdrawing misused agricultural land from questionable owners and selling it at an auction to those who can and want to cultivate the land

Russia's move towards the cultivating Non-GMO food is a clear victory against biotech giants such as Monsanto, Dupont, Dow Chemical Company, BASF, Bayer and Syngenta also known as the "Big 6".

Kenya vs. Monsanto, Hillary Clinton, USAID, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Kenya banned the imports and the planting of GMOs on November 21st, 2012. The Kenyan Ministry of Public Health ordered public health officials to enforce the ban on the importation of GMO products and remove all GMO laced products from store shelves.

However, according to an *RT News* article earlier this year titled '*Monsanto, US, & Gates Foundation pressure Kenya to reverse GMO ban*' highlights Washington's interest regarding Monsanto's technology to import and to produce GMO crops in Kenya:

Monsanto's modified cotton seeds produce insecticides to poison butterflies and moths. Dr Charles Waturu, director of the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), claims the Monsanto technology is the only solution, even though a recent Spanish study found Monsanto's seed MON810 does not increase yields or reduce damage compared to natural maize.

Hillary Clinton, as US Secretary of State, visited KARI's facilities in 2009. At the time, the activist watchdog group GM Watch highlighted the failure of the US\$6 million USAID-Monsanto-KARI GMO sweet potato project

The 2009 article by www.gmwatch.org titled '*Hillary and Vilsack to Promote GMOs in Africa*' by Jill Richardson mentioned Ben Burkett, president of the *National Family Farm Coalition* who explains what happened in the 1990's regarding Monsanto and the *United States Agency for International Development* (USAID) in Kenya:

In the 1990s, USAID, together with Monsanto, helped spearhead a 14-year, \$6 million project through the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) to develop a genetically modified, virus-resistant sweet potato. The project has proven to be a failure. Local varieties outperformed GM varieties in field trials. Researchers in Uganda developed a virus-resistant hybrid through conventional breeding techniques at a tiny fraction of the cost. KARI continues to collaborate with the Monsanto Corporation and USAID researching biotechnological projects, advocating a model of agricultural development that relies upon a top-down approach and unproven, expensive investments.

Ben Burkett, president of the National Family Farm Coalition, a member of the international farmers movement La Via Campesina, cautioned, "As an African American farmer who has visited farmers in Africa many times, I am deeply concerned that much of the Obama Administration's pledge to spend \$1 billion on agriculture research will be wasted on biotech research that benefits Monsanto more than it does small-scale farmers. While I applaud the renewed focus on helping Africa feed itself, our taxpayer money is doomed to be wasted if it continues to fund business as usual. Secretary Clinton and Secretary

Vilsack need to learn from previous disastrous biotechnology experiments such as the Kenyan GM sweet potato project. Many Kenyan farmers resent the U.S., Monsanto and the Gates Foundation for continuing to shove unwanted biotechnology down their throats”

According to the *RT News* report, the push to reintroduce GMO seeds in Kenya is backed by The *Water Efficient Maize for Africa* (WEMA) which works with the Kenyan-based African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF). The AATF has several key partners who work or help finance the GMO project in Kenya including the *UK’s Department for International Development* (DFID), *USAID*, and *the Rockefeller Foundation*:

GM seeds can negatively affect soil and often flood markets, making it difficult for small farmers to keep up. Hybrid seeds are more difficult to germinate leading to increased costs for farmers. The Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) is “a public/private partnership, led by the Kenyan-based African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Howard G. Buffett Foundation, and USAID”.

AATF, “a partnership between USAID, the Rockefeller Foundation, Monsanto, Dupont/Pioneer, Dow Agrosiences, Syngenta, and Aventis” and funded by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), has lobbied for the use of GMO in Kenya. In 2008, AATF received US\$47 million from the Gates Foundation, which has been criticized by global activists for pushing a “big agribusiness” approach to African farming

Russia, Kenya, most EU member states and others around the world have banned or are in the process of banning GMOs are leading the Non-GMO Revolution. With Russia’s announcement that they plan to lead the world in exporting Non-GMO food is an important step. Hopefully more countries around the globe can follow in the same footsteps. The March against Monsanto is one other way to show the “Big 6” the fight will continue.

Here is a video by the *Organic Consumers Association*:

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