

Open Letter: Growing Opposition to Round Table on Responsible Soy

May 2010

The undersigned organisations reject the “responsible” label for soy developed by the Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS). The attempts by the Round Table on Responsible Soy to greenwash large scale genetically modified (GM) soy production by labelling it as “responsible” will aggravate the problems caused by industrial soy production, instead of providing solutions.¹

The RTRS is expected to launch its “responsible” label after its conference in June 2010 in Brazil. Industrial soy production has caused rampant social and environmental damage in South America, including habitat destruction, deforestation, destruction of local food production systems, degraded soil fertility, exposure of local people to toxic pesticides and the large scale displacement of local communities and small farming systems.²

In the North, large scale soy production has facilitated unprecedented industrialisation of the food chain, increasing reliance on imported animal feed and promoting unsustainable animal production with negative consequences for farming, the environment and people’s health, and encouraging unsustainable consumption patterns. Intensive meat, dairy and egg production is an important contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions³, while agrofuels from soy could produce more emissions than fossil fuels.⁴

Multinational companies reap huge financial rewards from this unsustainable production system at both ends.

The RTRS cannot succeed in its stated aims to deliver “responsible” soy because:

1) RTRS lacks support and is not representative

The RTRS claims to be an “international multi-stakeholder initiative”⁵, but in reality the scheme has little or no support from sustainable family farmers, social movements or civil society, either in South America or in Europe. On the contrary the scheme faces strong criticism from these organizations especially in soy producing countries. Furthermore, major players in the Brazilian soy industry – APROSOJA and ABIOVE⁶ - have turned their backs on the RTRS due to disagreements on the inclusion of even the very weak deforestation clause (see 2).

2) RTRS criteria are seriously flawed

The RTRS claims to be developing a “responsible” label for mainstream soy, but is based on a wholly inadequate set of principles and criteria. For example:

- **GMOs and pesticides**

The RTRS will certify genetically modified (GM) soy as responsible. Most soy in South America is genetically modified to be resistant to the herbicide Glyphosate (marketed by Monsanto as RoundupReady soy). Both GM and non-GM soy are based on monocultures, both have destructive impacts on biodiversity and local communities and both use a range of agrochemicals, but herbicide-resistant soy has higher negative biosafety impacts than non-GM soy, particularly for soil life and fertility.⁷ While GM soy is promoted to farmers as a way to reduce labour costs, the continuous and

¹ See also “Thirteen Reasons Why the Roundtable On Responsible Soy Will Not Provide Responsible or Sustainable Soya Bean Production”, GM Freeze, May 2010

² See among many sources; “Killing Fields: the battle to feed Europe’s factory farms”, Friends of the Earth Europe, October 2009 (documentary and briefing); “Soy and Agribusiness Expansion in Northwest Argentina - Legalized deforestation and community resistance”, Chaya et.al, 2009

³ Livestocks long shadow, FAO, 2006

⁴ “Soy production and certification: the case of Argentinean soy-based biodiesel”, Tomei, Semino et al, 2010; “Once-hidden EU report reveals damage from biodiesel”, Reuters, 21 April 2010

⁵ www.responsiblesoy.org

⁶ ABIOVE recently launched its own certification scheme ‘Soja Plus’. WWF and other organisations involved in the Soy Moratorium in Brazil responded by saying they had not been involved in Soja Plus, and criticised it for ‘not including zero-deforestation’ and that it does not ‘involve different sectors of society in the definition of its concepts’. The same, however, is true for the RTRS.

⁷ Gordon B, 2007 Manganese Nutrition of Glyphosate Resistant and Conventional Soybeans. *Better Crops* Vol Number 4, April 2007; Kremer and Means, “Glyphosate and glyphosate-resistant crop interactions with rhizosphere microorganisms”, *European Journal of Agronomy* (31, 2009)

indiscriminate application of herbicides resulting from the use of herbicide-resistant crops has severe impacts on the livelihoods and health of communities living around the soy fields. It has also accelerated the emergence of herbicide resistant weeds, which are a serious problem across thousands of hectares of soy in the US, Argentina and Brazil. This is also forcing a return to using more dangerous pesticides such as 2,4-D (a component of Agent Orange).⁸

• **Deforestation and soy expansion**

The RTRS criteria for “responsible” soy agreed in May 2009 do not prevent further deforestation. According to the RTRS, “responsible” soy can be grown on land that has been deforested as recently as May 2009. “Responsible” soy can even be grown on land that will be deforested in the future, as long as the producer can provide “scientific evidence” that there were no primary forest, or High Conservation Value Areas (HCVAs), on that land and that it did not affect “local peoples’ land” (which is not further defined).

It is not clear how these flawed criteria will be monitored and enforced.⁹

3) RTRS cannot address macro-level impacts of industrial farming

Importantly, the RTRS cannot address the deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions and social conflicts caused by displacing agricultural activities elsewhere (Indirect Land Use Change). Other impacts include rising food prices and huge pressures on land and resources.

4) RTRS claims climate benefits

RTRS “responsible” soy claims to have climate benefits, but would largely supply feed for unsustainable intensive poultry, livestock and agrofuel production. The perverse lobbying at the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen of the RTRS along with biotech giant Monsanto to gain carbon credits for industrial soy production gained them the international Angry Mermaid Award for worst climate lobbying.¹⁰ In the EU, the RTRS is trying to gain accreditation under the EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED) that contains the widely opposed 10% agrofuel target.¹¹

Some of the pilot projects of the RTRS involve small scale farming of soy, but this cannot mask the fact that the bulk of the RTRS’s “responsible” soy will be grown on large-scale plantations with heavy pesticide use and no consideration for the local people or the environment. Consumers are currently prevented from seeing the extent of the damage done by industrial (RoundupReady) soy as it happens far from their homes. European supermarkets use the RTRS to claim they are acting responsibly while carrying on with business as usual. Any supermarket that participates in the RTRS risks a backlash from its customers.

To address the impacts outlined above the undersigned organisations demand real solutions that move to a sustainable food production system that include:

- phasing out monoculture production systems and instead promoting agro-ecological systems, diversification of production and stimulation of local production for local markets that contribute to food security and food sovereignty in producer and consumer countries.
- promoting genuine land reforms and land rights in producing countries, which will address highly inequitable land ownership and concentration;
- drastically changing production models and consumption patterns required to feed a population of 9 billion in 2050 sustainably and equitably¹²; this means reducing the shocking levels of overconsumption and waste in the industrialised world
- abandoning intensive meat, dairy and egg production systems and moving towards low-input

⁸ “Who benefits from GM crops?” Friends of the Earth International, February 2008; “Impacts of Genetically Engineered Crops on Pesticide Use: The First Thirteen Years”, Charles Benbrook, November 2009

⁹ Thirteen reasons why the RTRS will not produce Responsible or Sustainable Soya Production, GM Freeze, May 2010, http://www.gmfreeze.org/uploads/13_reasons_rtrs_final.pdf

¹⁰ www.angrymermaid.org

¹¹ A special RTRS working group was formed to this aim, see www.responsiblesoy.org

¹² Research has shown that with reduced consumption of meat in rich countries, the world can be fed on sustainable livestock farming including necessary increases in protein intake in the developing world
http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/eating_planet_briefing.pdf

livestock systems

- eliminating Europe's dependency on plant protein imports and support a move towards more low input, grass based livestock systems.
- stopping the promotion of agrofuel production as a climate solution for rich countries and instead developing better transport systems that reduce demand for energy and fuel.

Signatories:

International networks:

European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)
Friends of the Earth International
Global Forest Coalition
IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements)
Movimiento Mundial por los Bosques Tropicales/ World Rainforest Movement
Red por una América Latina Libre de Transgénicos

Organisations:

11.11.11, Flemish federation of North-South organisations, Belgium
African Biodiversity Network (ABN)
African Centre for Biosafety, South Africa
AFRICANDO Ongd, Gran Canaria
Afrika-Europa netwerk, Netherlands
Alianza Cívica Chiapas, Mexico
All Nepal Peasants' Federation (ANPFa)
AMAP, Alianza Mexicana por la Autodeterminación de los Pueblos, Mexico
Amazon Watch, United States
Amigos de la Tierra Argentina
Amigos de la Tierra España - Friends of the Earth Spain
APROMAC – Associação de Proteção ao Meio Ambiente, Brasil
Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft, Via Campesina Germany
ASEED Europe
ASK (Arbeitsgruppe Schweiz-Kolumbien / Swiss Working Group on Colombia)
Asociación ANDES, Alejandro Argumedo, Peru
Asociación Civil Desarrollo Territorial Monteros, de Monteros -Tucumán –Argentina
Asociación Civil GLEDUCAR, Argentina
Asociación de Defensa de la Vida ADEVI, Peru
Asociación de Solidaridad con Colombia, KATÍO, Spain
Asociación Ecológica Madremonje, Colombia
Asociación Entrepueblos, Estado Español
Asociación Pachamama Ayacucho, Peru
Association Bio Consom'acteurs, France
Association of Latvian Organic Agriculture, Latvia
Associations 21, Belgium
Attac AgrarNetz, Germany
Attac España
Attac Poland
AVES France, A Voice for Endangered Species
BASE Investigaciones Sociales, Asunción - Paraguay
Basler Appell gegen Gentechnologie, Switzerland
BI "Kein Strom aus Palmöl!", Germany
BioForum Vlaanderen vzw, Belgium
Biofuelwatch, UK
Biowatch South Africa
BUND, Friends of the Earth Germany
Campaign for Real Farming, UK
Campaña Semillas de Identidad, Colombia
Campaña Sin maíz no hay país, México
Canadians for Action on Climate Change

Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, Canada
CAPOMA-DDHH (Centro de Acción Popular Olga Márquez de Aredez en defensa de los Derechos Humanos), Ledesma-Jujuy-Argentina
Carbon Trade Watch
CATAPA, Comité Académico Técnico de Asesoramiento a Problemas Ambientales, Belgium
Cátedra Libre de Soberanía Alimentaria - Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina
CDM Watch
Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment (CENESTA), Iran
Centro de Estudios Históricos Arturo Jauretche, Argentina
Centro de estudios sobre Tecnologías Apropriadas de Argentina (CETAAR)
CNCD, Centre National de Coopération au Développement, Belgium
CESTA, Friends of the Earth El Salvador
COAG, España
COECOCEIBA - Amigos de la Tierra Costa Rica
Colectiu Transgènics Foral, Catalunya
Combat Monsanto, France
COMISIÓN MULTISECTORIAL DE URUGUAY
Comissão da Marcha Mundial das Mulheres de Sergipe, Brazil
Comite Oscar Romero Madrid, Spain
Comité pour l'Annulation de la Dette du Tiers-Monde, France (CADTM), France
Concerned Citizens against Climate Change (4C), Netherlands
CONAMURI, Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Rurales e Indigenas, Paraguay
Conselho Municipal dos Direitos da Mulher de Lins (SP), Brazil
Consumidores por el desarrollo, Peru
Confédération Paysanne, France
Coordinador Nacional Agrario de Colombia (CAN)
Corporate Europe Observatory
Cristianos Sin Fronteras, Peru
Development Fund, Norway
Dialogo Convencion Climatica, Mexico
Don't Waste Arizona, Phoenix, AZ USA
Ecologistas en Acción, Spain
Ecological Society of the Philippines
Econexus
Ecoportal.net, Argentina
Ecos the Saladillo, Argentina
ECOQUILPUÉ, Región de Valparaíso, Chile
Ecumenical Office for Peace and Justice, Germany
EdPAC -Educación para la Acción Crítica, España
ENLACE, Comunicación y Capacitación, A.C., México
EQUIVITA, Comitato Scientifico Antivivisezionista, Italy
Eurolatina, Belgique
European GMO-free Citizens, the Netherlands
FASE - Solidarity and Educação, Brazil
FDCL - Centro de Investigación y Documentación Chile-América Latina, Germany
FECBE, Federación de ecuatorianos en Bélgica, Belgium
Federación de Prosumidores Agroecológicos AGROSOLIDARIA BOYACÁ, Colombia
Federación Nacional de Trabajadores del Agua Potable del Peru – FENTAP
Fédération Inter-Environnement Wallonie, Belgium
Federation of Organic Food Enterprises / Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft (BÖLW), Germany
Fédération Unie de Groupements d'éleveurs et d'agriculteurs (FUGEA), Via Campesina Belgique
FERN
FOCO (Foro Ciudadano de Participación por la Justicia y los Derechos Humanos), Argentina
Focus on the Global South
Fondazione Diritti Genetici, Italy
Food and Water Europe (FWE)
Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, USA
Fórum Carajás, Brazil
FIAN Germany
FIAN Netherlands
Friends of the Earth Cyprus
Friends of the Earth France (Amis de la Terre)

Friends of the Earth Vlaanderen, Belgium
Friends of the Earth Brussels, Belgium
Fundacja Pomaranczowa Alternatywa/ Orange Alternative Foundation, Poland
GAIA, Portugal
Gene Ethics, Australia
Gen-ethisches Netzwerk/ Gen-ethical Network, Germany
GeneWatch, UK
GLOBAL 2000 - Friends of the Earth Austria
GM Free Australia
GM Free Cymru, Wales
GM-free Ireland Network
GM Freeze, UK
GM Watch, UK
Green Health Watch Magazine, UK
Grupo de Investigación en Derechos Humanos y Sostenibilidad, Cátedra UNESCO – UPC, Cataluña
Grupo de Mujeres de San Cristobal de las Casas, A.C, Chiapas, Mexico
Grupo de Reflexion Rural, Argentina
Grupo Semillas, Colombia
Grupo Thunhupha, Bolivia
Guatemala Solidarität Österreich (Solidarity with Guatemala of Austria)
Hegoa Instituto de Estudios sobre Desarrollo y Cooperación Internacional, País Vasco
Ibase - Brazilian Institute of Economic and Social Analyses
ICEPH - Instituto Cordillerano de Estudios y Promoción Humana, Río Negro, Argentina
ICPPC - International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside, Poland
Informationsgruppe Lateinamerika (IGLA), Vienna, Austria
India FDI Watch
Iniciativa contra los Agronegocios - America Latina – Nicaragua, El Salvador
Iniciativa Radial, Argentina
Initiative Colibri, Germany
Institute for Responsible Technology, Fairfield, USA
Institute for Sustainable Development, Ethiopia
Institute of Science in Society, Dr. Mae-Wan Ho, UK
Interessengemeinschaft für gentechnikfreie Saatgutarbeit (Germany, Austria, Switzerland)
JKPP (Jaringan Kerja Pemetaan Partisipatif / Community Mapping Network), West Java, Indonesia
Kenya Debt Relief Network (KENDREN)
Knoll Farms, California, USA
Kooperation Brasilien, Germany
Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Centre, Nigeria
Loophole Community Centre, Melbourne, Australia
MADGE Australia Inc
Madras del Pueblo del Sureste, AC, Chiapas, México
Mandala Gardening Initiative, Ottawa, Canada
Mangrove Action Project, USA
Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Brazil
Marcha Mundial das Mulheres de Caxias do Sul, Brazil
Marea Creciente Mexico
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, USA
MASIPAG (Farmer-Scientist Partnership for Development), Philippines
MAIZ (Movimiento Agrario Indígena Zapatista), Mexico
Mesa Amplia por el cierre definitivo del incinerador de residuos tóxicos, Argentina
Movimiento Campesino Paraguayo (MCP), Via Campesina Paraguay
Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas Tz'ununija'/REMTE, Guatemala
Mouvement d'Action Paysanne (MAP), Florenville, France
MPI - Movimento Pró-Informação para a Cidadania e Ambiente, Portugal
Munloch Vigil, Scotland
National Fisheries Solidarity Movement, Sri Lanka
National Toxics Network - Working globally for a toxic-free future, Australia
Naturland Association for Organic Agriculture, Germany
Neal's Yard Remedies, UK
New York Climate Action Group, USA
NOAH, Friends of the Earth Denmark
NOUSUD, Cooperación internacional y desarrollo local, Mallorca, Islas Baleares

ÖBV-Via Campesina Austria
Oficina de Justicia, Paz e Integridad de la Creación, San Columbano, Chile
Oikos – Organic Norway, movement of organic producers and consumers
Organic Consumers Association, USA
Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña (OFRANEH), Honduras
Osservatorio informativo indipendente sulla Americhe, Italy
Otros Mundos AC - Amigos de la Tierra México
Our Common Future, UK
Oxfam-Solidariteit/Oxfam-Solidarité, Belgium
Perkumpulan Elang, Riau, Indonesia
Pesticide Action Network North America
Philippine Network on Climate Change
PLANT (Partners for the Land & Agricultural Needs of Traditional Peoples), USA
Platform Aarde Boer Consument, Netherlands
Plataforma de Solidaridad con Chiapas de Madrid, España
Polska Zielona Siec, (Polish Green Network), Poland
Pro REGENWALD, Germany
Proyecto Cultura y Solidaridad, España
QUERCUS - A.N.C.N., Portugal
RAPAL, Red de acción en plaguicidas de America Latina
RAPAL para Meso América y Caribe
Red de Coordinación en Biodiversidad A.C, Costa Rica
Red Jubileo Sur Mexico
Red Latinoamericana de Mujeres Transformando la Economía (REMTE)
Red Mexicana de Acción frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC)
Reforest the Earth, UK
RETS -Respuestas a las Empresas Transnacionales, Spain
Rettet den Regenwald, Germany
Robin Wood, Germany
Safe Alternatives for our Forest Environment (SAFE), USA
Save our Seeds, Germany
Scarborough Against Genetic Engineering, England
Service d'Information et de Formation sur l'Amérique latine et les Caraïbes (SEDIF), Belgique
Spire (Norwegian Development Funds Youth), Norway
Salva la Selva, Spain
Say No to GMOs, Texas, USA
Secretaría Regional Latinoamericana (Rel-UITA), Uruguay
Seeds Action Network (SAN), Germany
Semillas de Vida, México
Share The World's Resources, UK
SOBREVIVENCIA, Amigos de la Tierra Paraguay
Society for Threatened Peoples-International (GfbV-International)
Soil Association, UK
Solidarity Sweden-Latin America (Latinamerikagrupperna), Sweden
SOS FAIM Belgique
South Australia Genetic Food Information Network (SAGFIN), Australia
Soy Alliance, UK
Sunray Harvesters, India
Taller Ecologista, Argentina
Tierra del Sol, Organisation des immigrants equatoriens en Belgique
Timberwatch Coalition, South Africa
The Grail, KwaZulu Natal South Africa
Toxicsoy.org
Toxisphera, Associação de Saúde Ambiental, Brazil
Transnational Institute (TNI)
UCIZONI, Union de Comunidades Indigenas de la Zona Norte del Istmo, Mexico
Union paysanne, Québec (Canada)
Uniterre, Via Campesina Switzerland
Urban Permaculture Co-Operative, Melbourne, Australia
Vecinxs Autoconvocadxs, Córdoba, Argentina
Vereniging voor Ecologisch Leven en Tuinieren, Velt, Belgium
Voedselteams vzw, Belgium

Vóór de Verandering, Netherlands
Vredeseilanden, Belgium
War on Want, UK
Washington Biotechnology Action Council, USA
WECF - Women in Europe for a Common Future
Wervel, Belgium
Wholesome Food Association Limited, UK
World Family, UK
World Development Movement (WDM), UK
Xarxa de Consum Solidario, Barcelona, España
Xarxa de l'Observatori del Deute en la Globalització (ODG-Debtwatch), Catalonia, Spain
X minus Y Solidarity Fund, the Netherlands
Young Green Women, Sierra Leone