

International Day of Action against Monoculture Tree Plantations Ban on Genetically Engineered Trees Demanded

New York, US - On 21 September, the International Day of Action against Monoculture Tree Plantations [1], organizations, forest dependent communities, and Indigenous Peoples from around the globe will denounce industrial tree plantations due to their devastating social and ecological impacts.

[Global Justice Ecology Project](#), [Global Forest Coalition](#), [Campaign to STOP Genetically Engineered Trees](#), and [Biofuelwatch](#) are joining the International Day of Action against industrial tree plantations by demanding an immediate ban on the release of all genetically engineered (GE) trees, including outdoor field trials.

In May of this year, Global Justice Ecology Project (GJEP), the Campaign to STOP GE Trees and several local groups organized the largest protest in history against genetically engineered trees during the International Tree Biotechnology 2013 Conference in Asheville, NC (US). Inside and outside of the conference, activists engaged in loud and lively protests throughout the week with several arrested, throwing the conference into total confusion. The protests focused on highlighting the threats of invasive, flammable and water depleting GE eucalyptus trees.

The front line of the struggle against GE trees right now is the US Southeast, where industry has requested government permission to develop plantations containing millions of genetically engineered eucalyptus trees. In response, GJEP and the Campaign to STOP GE Trees are coordinating a three-week organizing tour at the end of October that will travel to campuses and communities throughout the states threatened by the development of GE eucalyptus plantations. The goal of the tour is to educate and organize grassroots and campus groups about the threats posed by GE trees to build informed opposition throughout the region.

In addition to GE eucalyptus trees, the Campaign is beginning to address the problem of GE American Chestnut trees. "We are very concerned about the rapid emergence of genetically engineered American Chestnut trees which are being genetically engineered for disease resistance to supposedly restore the species to its traditional range," stated Anne Petermann, Coordinator of the international Campaign to STOP GE Trees and Executive Director of Global Justice Ecology Project.

Petermann continued, "In reality, American Chestnuts, are being used to try to convince a highly skeptical public about the value of GE trees. If American Chestnuts are approved, they will be the gateway tree, opening the floodgates for the commercialization of other dangerous GE trees."

Simone Lovera, Executive Director of the Global Forest Coalition states, "If genetically engineered trees are approved in the US, it will serve as a green light for other countries, like Brazil and Paraguay, to legalize GE trees for use in plantations. This will reinforce existing negative social and ecological impacts of industrial tree plantations and force many indigenous peoples and peasants off their land."

GE trees are being promoted as a supposedly "sustainable" feedstock for fuel production. But wood-based bioenergy is already driving a massive new demand for timber, and escalating land grabs and the logging of native forests.

Dr. Rachel Smolker of Biofuelwatch explains the ramifications, "If unchallenged, the massive demand for wood to feed bioenergy production threatens to consume remaining biodiverse ecosystems. Some models project that all remaining native forests, grasslands and most other ecosystems worldwide could be converted to bioenergy plantations by 2065. [3] Successfully mitigating climate change will require protecting, not obliterating, remaining intact ecosystems. And GE trees and bioenergy are a step in exactly the wrong direction."

Contact:

Anne Petermann, GJEP and the Campaign to STOP GE Trees

+1.802.578.0477 anne@globaljusticeecology.org

Dr. Rachel Smolker, Biofuelwatch +1.802.482.2848 rsmolker@riseup.net

Simone Lovera, Global Forest Coalition (in Paraguay)

+595.21.663654 simone.lovera@globalforestcoalition.org

Notes to Editors:

1] [The International Day of Action against Monoculture Tree Plantations](#) emerged from a meeting organized by the World Rainforest Movement in Brazil in 2004 of communities fighting the expansion of industrial eucalyptus plantations due to their devastating social and ecological impacts.

The main aim of this coordinated day of action is to support the struggles of local communities in defense of their territories, food sovereignty, forest conservation, natural medicine as well as traditional values, customs and economies. The organizers say this coordinated day of action is critical for communities just beginning to confront companies that seek to enter their territories, and that knowing more about the struggles of other communities serves as an inspiration for their struggles.

2] [Fact Sheet on Genetically Engineered Trees](#)

3] [The Implications of Limiting CO2 Concentrations for Agriculture, Land Use, Land-use Change Emissions and Bioenergy](#), Wise et. al. 2009