

Brazil Defends GMOs at UN and Bars Tougher Rules on Biosafety

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Key United Nations negotiations on the safe trade of genetically modified (GM) crops and foods ended yesterday in acrimony.

Despite over 100 countries demanding comprehensive controls to limit GM contamination, the move was blocked by just two countries that sided with the GMO industry - New Zealand and Brazil.

This week's negotiations on the UN's Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety were aimed at bringing in international rules to reduce contamination from imports of GM crops and to introduce full labelling.

However, little progress was made in making laws stronger, a move called for by virtually all countries, especially in the developing world. Needing consensus to bring in the new laws, New Zealand and Brazil sided with big business.

"The actions of Brazil and New Zealand are shameless. They have prevented the vast majority from bringing in rules that will protect the environment," said Doreen Stabinsky, GMO Coordinator for Greenpeace International.

"Their victory, however, will be short-lived as global opposition to genetically engineered foods continues to grow."

"The world community has shown here this week that it wants laws to protect itself from the threat of genetically modified foods and crops," said Juan Lopez, GMO Coordinator of Friends of the Earth International.

"Two countries, Brazil and New Zealand, acting in the interest of big business, have held these talks hostage and destroyed the hopes of improving international laws."

The Biosafety Protocol provides a safety net to protect the environment from the threat of GM crops. Countries are encouraged to develop legislation that protects their biodiversity and can also ban imports of GM products if there are questions over its safety. To date 119 countries have ratified the Protocol.

Friends of the Earth - www.foecanada.org

Greenpeace Canada - www.greenpeace.ca