

Deputy Calls for Banning Monsanto and GM Seeds from Brazil

Contributed by Michèle Canes
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The presence of transgenic corn seeds in municipalities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in the south of Brazil, constitutes a threat to corn that has not been genetically modified, according to the agronomist and Greenpeace activist, Ventura Barbeiro.

He affirmed that pollen borne by the wind can end up affecting traditional crops, altering their genetic constitution, too.

"One of the greatest dangers involving corn is its high pollination potential, that is, its capacity for cross-fertilization. If a farmer plants a small area, it can genetically contaminate plantations in a radius extending from 500 meters to 1 kilometer," Ventura said.

In an interview with the Agência Brasil, the agronomist reacted to studies by the Ministry of Agriculture confirming the presence of GM (genetically modified) corn in some Rio Grande do Sul cities.

The studies were carried out to investigate an accusation made by state deputy, Brother Sérgio Górgen (PT). The lawmaker believes that genetically modified seeds will represent a problem for the region.

"The Poultry-Breeders' Association of Rio Grande do Sul is desperate, because, if the presence of transgenic corn in poultry ration is confirmed, the Rio Grande do Sul chicken industry will lose important export markets," he affirmed.

The Greenpeace activist said that the presence of illegal seeds attests the fragility of Brazil's borders and the absence of biosecurity laws.

"Illegal cultivation of transgenic corn in Rio Grande do Sul offers clear and objective proof that Brazil lacks a biosecurity policy and that surveillance is extremely weak."

Ventura explained that Greenpeace belongs to a network of organizations that are already mobilizing do to something about the situation in Rio Grande do Sul.

For deputy Górgen, punishment should be meted out not to the farmers, but to those who introduced the seeds. "I don't want the farmer to be punished. I want the smuggler, the salesman, and the multinational to be punished. Monsanto should be banished from the country."

Agência Brasil