

Who benefits from GM crops?

This excellent and fascinating report pulls together detailed and well researched evidence from Friends of the Earth staff in North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe. It provides case studies of the introduction, marketing, public relations and social, economic and environmental impacts of genetically modified (GM) soya and GM maize from the US, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, GM cotton in India, Indonesia and South Africa and from the limited commercial cultivation of GM maize in Europe. The strength of the analysis is the carefully documented exposé of the way that Monsanto and its supporters in the public and private sector work to promote adoption of GM seeds and transgenic strategies by fair means or foul, with 400 references to company propaganda, reports and those of independent scientists and commentators. There is a lot of useful technical information contrasting the exaggerated and misleading information on positive impacts for farmers disseminated by Monsanto, with the far less rosy assessments from independent sources and increasingly from government researchers.

A section documenting how GM crops are being pushed on African governments in the name of food security and poverty alleviation is particularly revealing. It explores the machinations of pro-GM fronts such as the African Agricultural Technology Foundation and ISAAA (International Service for the Acquisition

Exceedances of ADIs or ARfDs would be more meaningful.

Probably the greatest weakness with the guides is that they are stand-alone guidance, and are not integrated with other initiatives. The obvious route for integration would be through the national pesticides strategy but regrettably this only addresses environmental impacts and ignores impacts on public health, including from residues (this issue of PN, p5). It is possible that the aims of different initiatives could conflict, underlining the need to integration. While the Food Standards Agency is taking welcome steps towards reducing residues on UK food, they are not best placed to deliver this on their own and much greater integration with other activities, such as product assurance schemes, retailer initiatives and the national strategy will be essential for broad uptake.

The guides themselves, while they contain much useful information, need to be targeted better by separating out the advice relevant to growers from the advice for other stakeholders (such as Defra, levy bodies or other research funders) and separated from the general background information which will be unnecessary for experienced growers.

Consultation responses required by 19 June 2006.
FSA consultation, www.food.gov.uk/Consultations/ukwideconsults/2006/residueguide2

of Agri-biotech Applications) AfriCentre and the way that donor-funded projects have totally over-stated the relevance of GM research on food staples, using hunger as an emotive tool. The report indicates which international and bilateral donors have been involved in supporting GM research and dissemination attempts. The UK's Department for International Development is one of the few European country donors actively supporting GM strategies. It concludes with lessons learnt from a decade of Monsanto activity in expanding the GM seed market, manipulating regulatory and policy regimes, contaminating vast areas to provoke subsequent legalisation, unethical advertising, bribery and corruption and challenging farmers' rights to save seeds the world over. The report puts to bed the industry's claims that millions of small farmers have benefited from GM technology by highlighting how farmers in different countries have become disillusioned with industry promises. These farmers are voting with their feet and abandoning cultivation of GM crops.

*Friends of the Earth International, 'Monsanto, who benefits from gm crops?' Issue 110 February 2006
www.foei.org/publications/pdfs/gmcrops2006full.pdf*

Chemical warfare in Colombia

This short, eminently readable book provides an absorbing and detailed analysis of more than six years of aerial application of Monsanto's Roundup herbicide by the US and Colombian authorities under 'Plan Colombia', ostensibly to eradicate the growing of coca, the precursor to cocaine. Written by a leading British investigative journalist on Latin America, it starts with the health, environmental and social damage inflicted by the spray operations on poor peasant communities and shows how

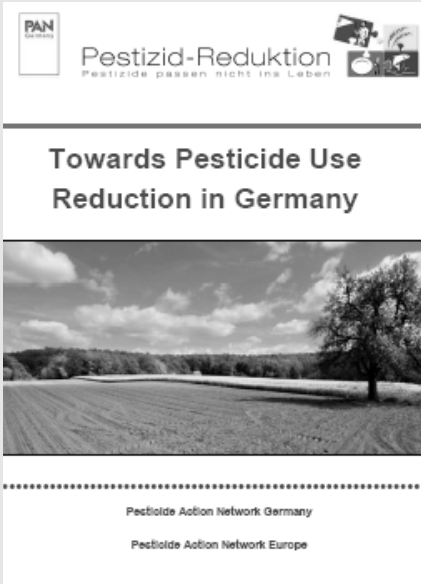
this has failed to stop coca production, merely shifting cultivation to other areas. It describes the courageous work of PAN partners in Colombia and Ecuador to alert the public to the health consequences and human rights abuses implicit in fumigation strategies, expanding the information Pesticides News has previously reported (see PN 53 and 54). In addition to documenting the acute effects, Dr Adolfo Maldonado with Accion Ecologica in Ecuador, has now found indications of longer term genetic damage. Analysing the blood of women living in and near the areas under fumigation, those who had been affected by spraying averaged 36% damage to their chromosomes, compared with 7% in controls, and one woman had 85% of her cells damaged, 21 times the normal level.

The real strength of this book is how it delves beneath the public policy veneer of the 'war on drugs' to examine the deeper motives of the Colombian and US governments and military to use tax-payer funded drugs enforcement operations as a convenient cover for political ends, namely to crush the Colombian guerrilla movement, along with opposition to the neoliberal policies of the current government, and to prepare this strategically important country for US market and military expansion. The authors liken the current fumigation programme to earlier imperialist abuse of pesticides for political ends, most notably in Vietnam with Agent Orange. The final chapter critically assesses the impact of the coca eradication strategy on the drug trade and argues for a totally different approach, based on reducing demand and illegality in the drug consuming nations.

Chemical warfare in Colombia. The costs of coca fumigation. Hugh O'Shaughnessy and Sue Branford. Latin America Bureau, London, 2005. 126pp, £8.99, www.lab.org.uk

Reducing pesticide use in Germany

This new PAN Germany/PAN Europe report 'Towards Pesticide Use Reduction in Germany' has been translated German into English. The 79 page report discusses the issue of pesticide use reduction in Germany from different angles and provides useful arguments to counterbalance many of the misleading arguments of the industry. The report also contains useful information to public interest groups and NGOs in any (European) country, using summaries of the latest scientific research into themes such as 'Pesticides and the environment', 'Pesticides and health' and insights into the global pesticide market. PAN Germany demands concerning a national pesticide use reduction plan and calls for change in crop protection are also relevant for many countries in Europe. The report will help other organisations to use the same demands and rational expressed by PAN Germany for pesticide use reduction in their countries.



The image shows the cover of a report titled 'Towards Pesticide Use Reduction in Germany'. At the top left is the PAN logo. To its right is the text 'Pestizid-Reduktion' with the subtitle 'Pestizide passen nicht ins Leben' and a small graphic of a person and a plant. Below this is the main title 'Towards Pesticide Use Reduction in Germany' in a large, bold font. The central part of the cover features a black and white photograph of a rural landscape with a large tree in the foreground and a field in the background. At the bottom, it lists 'Pesticide Action Network Germany' and 'Pesticide Action Network Europe'. The URL www.pan-europe.info/publications/index.shtml is printed at the very bottom.