SBSTTA WRM Open Letter to Stop GE Trees

Author: Lucy Sharratt<info@cban.ca><aname="eztoc1369_0_1"id="eztoc1369_0_1"><h3>OpenlettertoallmembersoftheConventiononBiologicalDiversity(CBD)SubsidiaryBodyonScientific,TechnicalandTechnologicalAdvice(SBSTTA)</h3> February,2008 Theundersigned,membersoforganizationsfromcountrieswhereresearchonthegeneticmodificationoftreesisbeingcarriedout,wouldliketoexpressinthislettersomeofthereasonsofourdeepconcern. Firstofall,ourconcernisbasedonthefactthatthegeneticmanipulationbeingundertakenisaimedatconsolidatingandfurtherexpandingamodelofmonoculturetreeplantationsthathasalreadyproventoresultinseriousSocialandenvironmentalimpactsinmanyofourcountries. Inaddition,theuseoftransgenictreeswillfurtheraggravatetheproveniimpactsonwaterresources,sinceoneofthetraitsthatresearchersareattemptingtointroduceisfastergrowth,whichwouldmeanevengreaterconsumptionofwaterbytreeplantations. Atthesametime,researchisbeingundertakentointroducegenesthatwillmakethetreesmoreresistanttocoldtemperatures,forthepurposeofplantingtheminColderregionsandathigheraltitudesinthemountains.Thiswouldleadtosocialandenvironmentalimpactsinareasthatuntilnowhavenotbeenaffectedbytheimpactsofcurrenttreemonocultures. Researchisalsounderwaytodeveloptreeswithinsecticideproperties,inordertomakethemresistanttoinsectslikethepineshootmoth(Ryacioniabuoliana).Thiscouldresultinthedeathofalargenumberofotherinsectspecies,withconsequentimpactsonlocalfauna'sfoodchainsandperhapsevenonthepollenizationofnativefloraspeciesthatdependonthoseinsects. Researchisalsobeingundertakentointroducegenesthatwouldincreasethetrees'resistancetotheherbicideglyphosate,whichwouldleadtoevenmoreserioussocialandenvironmentalimpacts,includingthedestructionoflocalfloraandimpactsonhumanhealth. Additionally,researchisbeingcarriedouttodevelopeucalyptustreeswithahighercellulosecontentfortheproductionofcelluloseforpaperandfortheproductionofethanol.Thiswouldmeanreducingtheamountoflignin,thecomponentthatprovidestreeswithstructuralstrength,thusmakingthemmoresusceptibletosuffering-aswellascausing-seriousdamageduringwindstorms. ItisimportanttonotethatthelastConferenceofthePartiestotheConventiononBiologicalDiversity(COP-8)adopteddecisionVIII/19(Forestbiologicaldiversity:implementationoftheprogrammeofwork),which"recommendsPartiestotakeaprecautionaryapproachwhenaddressingtheissueofgeneticallymodifiedtrees." ThisdecisionisfoundedonCOP-8'srecognitionof"theuncertaintiesrelatedtothepotentialenvironmentalandsocio-economicimpacts,includinglong-termandtransboundaryimpacts,ofgeneticallymodifiedtreesonglobalforestbiologicaldiversity,aswellasonthelivelihoodsofindigenousandlocalcommunities,andgiventheabsenceofreliabledataandofcapacityinsomecountriestoundertakeriskassessmentsandtoevaluatethosepotentialimpacts." WethereforewishtocalluponyoutorecommendtheConventiononBiodiversityConventiontodefinitelybanGEtrees-includingfieldstrials-becauseoftheseriousriskstheyposeonthePlanet'sbiologicaldiversity. WorldRainforestMovement