

ETC Group - Monitoring Power, Tracking Technology, Strengthening Diversity.

Biodiversity & Genetic Resources



Biological diversity refers to all living organisms, their genetic material and the ecosystems of which they are a part. It is usually described at three levels: genetic, species, and ecosystem diversity. Genetic diversity is the variation of genes between and within species. Genetic diversity within a species permits it to adapt to new pests and diseases, and to changes in environment, climate, and agricultural methods. Biological diversity is the cornerstone of sustainable agriculture and world food security. The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (often referred to as CBD or Biodiversity Convention) is a legally binding framework for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and one of the principle fora for negotiations related to access, benefit sharing and the role of indigenous and local communities.

Latest Publications

[Who Will Feed Us? Questions for the Food and Climate Crises](#)

Type: Communiqué
Date: 12/14/2009
Language: English

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Who Will Feed Us?

2009's most important intergovernmental meeting on the climate and food crises has already happened. In October, as climate negotiators were fighting in Bangkok and as the UN food agencies were jousting over a restructured response to the food crisis and plans for the World Food Summit, the Food and Agriculture Organizations's (FAO) Commission on Genetic Resources met quietly in Rome to review the preparedness of the international community to adapt and develop crops, livestock, aquatic and microbial genetic resources used in food and agriculture to address climate change. The meeting also considered the political and corporate constraints that could prevent a major strategic shift to achieve our food security. The Rome Food Summit in November and the Copenhagen Climate Summit in December should pay attention. At stake is the answer to the most important question not being asked in... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[Declaration: Let's look before we leap!](#)

Type: News Item
Date: 12/10/2009
Language: English

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188.4KB

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Technology transfer is one of the four key topics being discussed under negotiations on Long-Term Cooperative Actions in

discussion contemplates various measures for accelerating the diffusion of technologies. It will most likely create an 'Action Plan' as well as a 'Technology Body' and various technical panels or innovation centres that will prove influential in the coming years in deciding which technologies get financial and political backing. We need to make sure the right technologies get the support they need and the wrong ones are discarded. That won't happen without a comprehensive social and environmental assessment process. We, civil society groups and social movements from around the world, understand the urgent need for real and lasting solutions to climate change. We recognise the deadly consequences that we all face... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[Appel du Groupe de Cordoue: à la cohérence et l'action dans les domaines de la Sécurité alimentaire et du Changement climatique](#)

Type: Other
Date: 11/05/2009
Language: French

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 189.7KB

Au début d'octobre 2009, le Groupe de Cordoue – un petit regroupement d'experts indépendants en questions relatives à l'alimentation et à l'agriculture (dont font partie celui qui a été le premier rapporteur spécial des Nations Unies sur le droit à l'alimentation ainsi que le titulaire actuel du poste) qui se réunit depuis deux ans – a publié une brève analyse (deux pages) portant sur la situation de la gouvernance à l'échelle mondiale en matière d'alimentation et d'agriculture et sur la nécessité de placer le droit à l'alimentation et les intérêts des paysans producteurs au centre du débat sur l'alimentation et le climat. Le rapport du Groupe a été largement distribué aux membres du Comité de la sécurité alimentaire mondiale des Nations Unies, qui s'est réuni à la mi-octobre, et il exerce depuis une influence sur les délibérations entourant le Sommet mondial de l'alimentation de novembre et la Conférence de Copenhague sur... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[A Call from the Cordoba Group for Coherence and Action on Food Security and Climate Change](#)

Type: Other
Date: 11/05/2009
Language: English

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 182.9KB

At the beginning of October 2009, the Córdoba Group -- a small gathering of independent food and agro-cultural specialists (including the first and current UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Food) that have been meeting over the past two years -- published a brief (two-page) analysis of the state of global governance around food and agriculture and of the need to place the Right to Food and the interests of peasant producers at the center of the food and climate debate. The Group's report was widely distributed at the UN Committee on World Food Security that met in mid-October and is influencing deliberations around both the World Food Summit in November and the December Conference in Copenhagen on Climate Change. The Report, "Call from Córdoba", follows.

-ETC Group

The Cordoba Group is formed by senior experts on hunger, agriculture, agrobiodiversity and human rights, convened in his/her personal capacities by the Chair of Hunger and Poverty... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[News Release: UK Royal Society on Geoengineering: The Emperor's New Climate?](#)

Type: News Item
Date: 08/28/2009
Language: English

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 83.3KB

ETC Group News Release 28 August 2009 www.etcgroup.org

SCIENCE FICTIONS: UK'S ROYAL SOCIETY TO ISSUE MAJOR REPORT ON GEOENGINEERING SEPTEMBER 1; BAN REAL-WORLD EXPERIMENTS, SAYS ETC GROUP

The oldest scientific academy in the world, the UK's Royal Society, will release its long-awaited report on geoengineering September 1st 2009 in London. The report, drafted by a panel dominated by geoengineering enthusiasts, is widely expected to recommend that the government support more research and perhaps even real-world experimentation of these controversial new technologies that intentionally manipulate the earth's climate on a large scale with the aim of lessening the effects of climate change.

"Geoengineering is a bad idea, and, unfortunately, it may transform Lord Rees's book from musings to memoir," says Diana Bronson, researcher for the international technology... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[The Emperor's New Climate: Geoengineering as 21st century fairytale](#)

Type: Other
Date: 08/28/2009
Language: English

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 199.8KB

ETC Group Special Report 28 August 2009 <http://www.etcgroup.org> The Emperor's New Climate: Geoengineering as 21st century fairytale

The idea of re-engineering the entire planet (geoengineering) used to be the stuff of science fiction, but in the past few years a small group of geoengineering enthusiasts has worked hard to give it a veneer of respectability. On 1st September, they will have succeeded in getting the world's oldest scientific academy, the UK's Royal Society, to legitimize dangerous planet-tinkering schemes with minimal transparency and even less public participation.

170 years after Hans Christian Andersen penned his tale of the Emperor's New Clothes, an analogous tale is being woven around an event in his homeland that will affect the entire planet: the global climate change negotiations this December in Copenhagen. This time, it's not a naked emperor... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[Biomass Power Grab Highlighted as Biotech Industry Meets in Montreal](#)

Type: News Item
Date: 07/21/2009
Language: English

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 102.5KB

News Release Biofuelwatch / ETC Group / Greenpeace

BIOMASS POWER GRAB HIGHLIGHTED AS BIOTECH INDUSTRY MEETS IN MONTREAL

Montreal- July 21 2009 -- As hundreds of delegates gathered for the Sixth Annual Conference on Industrial Biotechnology and Bioprocessing at Palais des congrès in Old Montreal, a group of NGOs held an early morning press conference across the street. Greenpeace, ETC Group and Biofuelwatch joined forces to warn that the "green" energy of the biotech industry was mostly hype, that governments should not add to their already generous subsidies of the industry and that the feedstock on which it is all based – so called "biomass" – is neither plentiful nor easily converted into renewable chemicals, plastics and fuels.

Jim Thomas, a researcher from ETC Group, charged that behind the thin, green veneer of clean energy and renewable plastics, Big Bio is, in fact, engaged in a huge industrial power grab:... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[Enola Patent Ruled Invalid: Haven't we Bean here before? \(Yes, yes, yes, yes and yes.\)](#)

Type: News Item
Date: 07/14/2009
Language: English

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ETC Group News Release 14 July 2009 www.etcgroup.org

Enola Patent Ruled Invalid: Haven't we Bean here before? (Yes, yes, yes, yes and yes.) On July 10, 2009, the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ruled that U.S. patent 5,894,079 (the "Enola" bean patent), which claims a yellow bean of Mexican origin, is invalid because none of the patent claims meet the criterion of non-obviousness. The case has been closely watched by civil society groups concerned about biopiracy, the patenting of life and the corporate control of food production. The Court's clear 7-page decision argues that anyone interested in reproducing or improving Mexican yellow beans would have done exactly what the "inventor" Larry Proctor did: "plant the beans, harvest the resulting plants for their seeds, planting the latter seeds, and repeat the process two more times." [1] The decision concludes... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[Terminating Food Sovereignty in Ecuador? President opens door to Terminator seeds](#)

Type: News Item
Date: 04/17/2009
Language: English

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 104.1KB

ETC Group News Release April 17, 2009 www.etcgroup.org

Terminating Food Sovereignty in Ecuador? President opens door to Terminator seeds

On February 18, 2009, the Ecuadorian Congress approved a new Law on Food Sovereignty, which, among other important points, declared the country "free of transgenic crops and seeds." However, in spite of vocal popular opposition, the legislation left the door open to approvals of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in "exceptional" cases. Now, President Rafael Correa has proposed several changes to the legislation – in what is known in Ecuador as a partial-veto – and sent it back to the Congress. The president's changes dangerously weaken the law and open the door to Terminator seeds.

The technology has been widely... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[LAST CALL FOR GEO-ENGINEERING
SUBMISSIONS / PIE-IN-THE-SKY CONTEST
DEADLINE: APRIL 1 2009](#)

Type: News Item
Date: 03/30/2009
Language: English

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 80.8KB

ETC Group News 30 March 2009 www.etcgroup.org

LAST CALL FOR GEO-ENGINEERING SUBMISSIONS PIE-IN-THE-SKY CONTEST DEADLINE: APRIL 1 2009

There are just two days left to submit your very own wacky geo-engineering scheme to the first-ever international Pie-in-the-Sky contest sponsored by ETC Group, which closes this Wednesday, April 1. Contestants have their work cut out for them to surpass the outlandish schemes the real geo-engineers are concocting: sulfates in the atmosphere, mirrors in the sky, iron in the oceans, whiter clouds, fake trees. While preposterous, these schemes are being seriously debated by politicians, pundits and carbon-offsetters the world over and are poised to receive more research dollars and more air time in high-level international meetings. Practical, crucial measures – like reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and protecting vulnerable populations from the devastating effects of climate... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[“Wartmongers” Thwarted as Bumpy Pumpkin
Patent Goes Flat](#)

Type: News Item
Date: 03/20/2009
Language: English

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 98.2KB

ETC Group Update March 20, 2009 www.etcgroup.org

“Wartmongers” Thwarted as Bumpy Pumpkin Patent Goes Flat

Last month, [ETC Group reported on a patent application](#)(1) under examination at the US Patent & Trademark Office (USPTO) in which Siegers Seed Company of Holland, Michigan, claimed invention of a “warted pumpkin...wherein the outer shell includes at least one wart...” On February 13, the USPTO put its 9-page verdict in the mail(2) rejecting all of the application's 25 claims.

“The good news is that the USPTO rejected all claims in the warty pumpkin patent application,” says Silvia Ribeiro from ETC Group's Mexico office. “And also that in her decision, the patent examiner cited a catalogue from Seed Savers Exchange – a non-profit organization that preserves and distributes heirloom seeds.... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[H\(a\)LF a Loaf: Finally, in Madrid, a High-Level
Forum considers Governance](#)

Type: Communiqué
Date: 01/22/2009
Language: English

Download PDF: 13.9MB**Download PDF2:** 495.5KB

To Download the full report, click on Download PDF for Print-Quality version. Download PDF2 for Screen-Quality version. ETC Group Communiqué 23 January 2009 www.etcgroup.org

Issue: The main (and much-needed) goal of the Madrid High-Level meeting is to reorganize the intergovernmental management of food and agriculture. At the last food crisis in 1974, OECD states savaged the UN's unified system and carved it into four warring factions. In the midst of today's food crisis, the four remain underfunded, weakly governed and dismayingly competitive. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the biggest "loner" in the crowd, the World Food Program (WFP), are all either suffering from harsh external reviews or major program reorganization. Complicating the problem, UN... [Read more](#)

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[LOHAFEX Update: Geo-engineering ship plows on as Environment Ministry calls for a halt](#)

Type: News Item
Date: 01/13/2009
Language: English

Download PDF: 119.3KB

ETC Group News Release January 13, 2009 www.etcgroup.org LOHAFEX Update: Geo-engineering ship plows on as Environment Ministry calls for a halt

Amid a growing storm of protest stretching across four continents, the Federal Environment Minister of Germany, Sigmar Gabriel, has reportedly called for the German research vessel, RV Polarstern, to halt its controversial ocean fertilization experiment.(1) However, the geo-engineers on board appear to be ignoring the Minister's call. Already at sea, they are heading full steam for their intended dumping site.

Last week, ETC Group and our allies in Germany, India and South Africa reported on an Indo-German research expedition, codenamed LOHAFEX, which was about to breach the global moratorium on ocean fertilisation established through the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).(2) The LOHAFEX researchers plan to spread 6 tonnes of iron sulphate (in earlier statements, they said... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[German Geo-engineers Show Iron Will to Defy Global UN Moratorium](#)

Type: News Item
Date: 01/08/2009
Language: English

Download PDF: 118.9KB

ETC Group News Release January 8, 2009 www.etcgroup.org

German Geo-engineers Show Iron Will to Defy Global UN Moratorium

Nations agreement signed by 191 nations and brokered by Germany last May. In response, civil society groups are calling on governments and the UN to take action.

The RV Polarstern, a German research vessel owned by the Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research of Bremerhaven, Germany, left Cape Town on 7th January 2009 to begin a large scale geo-engineering experiment known as LOHAFEX. The LOHAFEX voyage, approved by the Indian and German governments according to Dr. Victor Smetacek, co-Chief Scientist of the expedition, proposes to dump iron sulphate particles over 300 square kilometres of open ocean in the Scotia Sea close to Antarctica.¹ The... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[News Release: Who Owns Nature?](#)

Type: News Item
Date: 11/12/2008
Language: English

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ETC Group News Release November 13, 2008 www.etcgroup.org

Who Owns Nature?

New report warns of corporate concentration, commodification of nature; highlights global resistance grounded in "Food Sovereignty"

ETC Group today releases a 48-page report, "Who Owns Nature?" on corporate concentration in commercial food, farming, health and the strategic push to commodify the planet's remaining natural resources.

In a world where market research is becoming increasingly proprietary and pricey, ETC Group's report names names, discloses market share and provides top 10 industry rankings up and down the corporate food chain. Not all the corporations identified in ETC Group's new report are household names, but collectively they control a staggering share of the commercial products found on industrial farms, in our refrigerators and medicine cabinets.

An international advocacy... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[Who Owns Nature?](#)

Type: Communiqué
Date: 11/12/2008
Language: English

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Who Owns Nature?

In this 100th issue of the *ETC Communiqué* we update Oligopoly, Inc. – our ongoing series tracking corporate concentration in the life industry. We also analyze the past three decades of agribusiness efforts to monopolize the 24% of living nature that has been commodified, and expose a new strategy to capture the remaining three-quarters that has, until now, remained beyond the market economy.

To download the full 48-page report, click on 'Download PDF,' above.

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Categories:

[À qui appartient la nature?](#)

Type: Communiqué
Date: 11/12/2008
Language: French

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À qui appartient la nature?

Pouvoir des grandes sociétés et ultime frontière de la marchandisation du vivant

Problèmes, obsessions et occasions : une préface

Il y a trente ans, l'humanité avait un problème; la science avait une obsession; et l'industrie tenait une occasion. Notre problème était l'injustice. Les rangs des affamés ne cessaient de grossir et les rangs des agriculteurs, de s'affaiblir. De son côté, la science était obsédée par la biotechnologie – la possibilité de modifier génétiquement les cultures et le bétail (et l'être humain) pour les doter de traits qui allaient régler tous nos problèmes. L'industrie agroalimentaire tenait l'occasion de prélever l'énorme valeur ajoutée tout au long de la... [Read more](#)

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[News Release: Who Owns Nature?](#)

Type: News Item
Date: 11/12/2008
Language: English

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ETC Group News Release November 13, 2008 www.etcgroup.org Who Owns Nature? New report warns of corporate concentration, commodification of nature; highlights global resistance grounded in "Food Sovereignty" ETC Group today releases a 48-page report, "Who Owns Nature?" on corporate concentration in commercial food, farming, health and the strategic push to commodify the planet's remaining natural resources. In a world where market research is becoming increasingly proprietary and pricey, ETC Group's report names names, discloses market share and provides top 10 industry rankings up and down the corporate food chain. Not all the corporations identified in ETC Group's new report are household names, but collectively they control a staggering share of the commercial products found on industrial farms, in our refrigerators and medicine cabinets. An international advocacy organization based in Canada, ETC Group has been... [Read more](#)

Categories:

[As Extreme Genetic Engineers Gather in Hong Kong, Critics Warn of Corporate Grab on Plant Life: SynBio 4.0 = SynBio-4-profit](#)

Type: News Item
Date: 10/09/2008
Language: English

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ETC Group News Release 9 October 2008 www.etcgroup.org

The Last Straw? As Extreme Genetic Engineers Gather in Hong Kong, Critics Warn of Corporate Grab on Plant Life SynBio 4.0 = SynBio-4-profit

Synthetic biologists, a brave new breed of science entrepreneurs who engineer life-forms from scratch, will hold their largest-ever global gathering in Hong Kong, October 10-12, known as "Synthetic Biology 4.0." Although most people have never heard of synthetic biology, it's moving full speed ahead fueled by giant agribusiness, energy and chemical corporations with little debate about who will control the technology, how it will be regulated (or not) and despite grave concerns surrounding the safety and security risks of designer organisms. Corporate investors/partners include BP, Chevron, Shell, Virgin Fuels, DuPont, Microsoft, Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland.

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[Commodifying Nature's Last Straw? Extreme Genetic Engineering and the Post-Petroleum Sugar Economy](#)

Type: Other
Date: 10/08/2008
Language: English

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Peak oil, skyrocketing fuel costs and climate crisis are driving corporate enthusiasm for a "biological engineering revolution" that some predict will dramatically transform industrial production of food, energy, materials, medicine and all of nature. Advocates of converging technologies promise a greener, cleaner post-petroleum future where the production of economically important compounds depends not on fossil fuels – but on biological manufacturing platforms fueled by plant sugars. It may sound sweet and clean, but the so-called "sugar economy" will also be the catalyst for a corporate grab on all plant matter – and destruction of biodiversity on a massive scale.

Click on the 'Download PDF' icon above to download ETC Group's 12-page report, *Commodifying Nature's Last Straw? Extreme Genetic Engineering and the Post-Petroleum Sugar Economy*. (PDF2 above is a higher resolution file.)

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