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**CONTROVERSIAL U.S.-BASED CORPORATION CAUSES SOCIAL,  
ENVIRONMENTAL, AND HEALTH CONCERNS IN THE WESTERN  
CAPE**

\*for immediate release\*

Monsanto, the controversial U.S.-based multinational company, has applied to conduct field trials with genetically modified maize in five locations across South Africa, including the Lutzville district in the Western Cape.

South Africa is the only country in Africa that has allowed the genetic modification of food crops to date and the only country in the world to have allowed the modification of a staple food - maize. Great numbers of consumers around the world have rejected GM food because it is not labeled as such in shops, and its effects are unpredictable. Scientific evidence on genetically modified (GM) food shows that it could cause a wide range of serious unexpected health impacts such as allergies, ingesting of pesticides, and super resistant germs, and transform the environment in ways we can't predict, like increased pest and weed resistance, soil impacts, and impacts on beneficial organisms. In fact, Monsanto has been involved in a number of lawsuits involving hundreds of millions of dollars, usually over health issues and patent issues.

When GM maize was introduced in the Eastern Cape, it created great hardships for small-scale farmers, like forcing them to take out loans to finance their crops and change their production methods. Farmers were forced to grow monocrops with chemicals and patented seeds, instead of being able to save their seeds each year.

Furthermore, contrary to popular belief, overwhelming scientific evidence suggests that agro-ecological practices and organic agriculture can greatly increase productivity of agriculture. Studies demonstrate that organic agriculture has the potential to meet food security needs and sustain the current global human population without putting more farmland into production, and without the negative environmental consequences of conventional agriculture.

Despite all of this, South Africa is one of the top ten countries in the world in terms of producing GMO crops, and has plans to follow the chemical industrial model of agriculture rather than supporting small-scale farmers and agroecological approaches to food production.

The Right to Agrarian Reform campaign and members of the Lutzville community strongly oppose Monsanto's field trials on social, economic, and environmental grounds. They will hold a public meeting on 5 May 2010 at 17h30 at the Uitkyk Community Hall in Lutzville as part of ongoing efforts to promote alternative agriculture and the right to food sovereignty.

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