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LUTZVILLE GMO OBJECTION

The Surplus People Project wants to draw the attention of the media and public to an important step in a scientific experiment that will affect all people in South Africa directly, seriously and in all likelihood negatively. This Monday on the 24th of May the Agricultural Research Council will oversee the harvesting of an experimental crop of maize in the Lutzville district on the West Coast of the Western Cape Province. The maize have been modified genetically in ways that its creators claim make it more resistant to draught. We will attend this harvesting to document this event, as well as to picket and protest. Why?

- This experiment with genetically modified maize is part of larger project done in conjunction with the US based corporation Monsanto. Its fundamental purpose is to allow Monsanto to patent maize seeds and thus seize control of the use and distribution of seed. Monsanto is motivated by greed for profits. It is claimed that this GMO maize will allow for the production of more food will therefore lessen hunger. It will actually cause more hunger. Hunger is not caused by the shortage of food. The world produce enough food for 11 billion people. Hunger is caused by inequality and the concentration of wealth. GMO maize will generate more inequality as it will force poor farmers to pay this rich corporation for the right to plant maize.
- This experiment undermines democracy and public participation. The advertisements used to invite public comment contain no information about the health and environmental risks associated with GMOs. It also uses a language filled with scientific and technical jargon, which makes it virtually impossible for the general public to fruitfully participate. It places no obligation on the people behind the experiment to make sure that the public is fully informed about all aspects and views on the issue.
- GMO foods have been proven to be harmful to health of rodents used in laboratory experiments. This means they are more than likely to be harmful to the health of human beings as well. Food corporations like Monsanto have released these GMO foods without proper safety and health tests. Their profits are their overriding concern.
- Nobody knows the consequences to the environment of releasing masses of organisms that genetically did not exist before. Everybody knows the consequences of corporate environmental recklessness.

This harvesting takes place as Monsanto is applying for permission for another similar experiment in the Lutzville area. Local activists are rallying community members to object to this. It will be historic as it will be the first time that a local community objects to GMO experimentation.

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