

**Illegal Genetically Modified rice** was found in Sierra Leone and Ghana in Africa. It is thought that the GM contaminated rice got to West Africa through the Food Aid from USAID and with the possible knowledge of the World Food Program.

Responding to this development, the Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth, Nigeria (ERA/FoEN) organised a regional conference on Biosafety in Abuja, Nigeria from November 27 to 29th, 2006. The theme of the conference was "African Biosafety Response."

The conference, which was attended by NGO representatives from Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Togo and Cameroun as well as international scientists, academics, officials of Nigerian government agencies and ministries, farmers' bodies, lawyers, journalists and students, deliberated on biosafety challenges facing the continent.

Worried by the intense pressure by the Biotech industry and donor agencies such as USAID and the Bill Gates Foundation on African governments to accept Genetically Modified crops; Concerned by the non-existence of strong people-centred Biosafety laws in countries of the region to effectively regulate and protect the people from the GMO invasion and its inherent hazards; Fearing that our peoples will be impacted through negative effects of GMO crops on local livelihoods, local farmers and public health; Emphasizing that the solution to food security in Africa is not GMOs, a product of profit-driven biotech industries, but policies to achieve improved farming practices, development of rural infrastructure and effective distribution networks for agricultural products; Recognising the contribution of science to development, but cautious about the science of genetic engineering that transfers genes from other species using viral bacterial, viral agencies and genes from unrelated species; Acknowledging the fact most African countries are Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety which mandates each country to put in place effective biosafety laws and Recognizing that the resort to biofuel, supposedly as an alternative to fossil fuel, is not the answer to critical issues of climate change and food shortages in the world,

**The participants made the following recommendations:**

- African governments put in place strict biosafety laws based on the precautionary principle,
- That such laws provide for the right of communities, regions and/or entire nations to completely reject GMOs,
- Rather than biofuel, African government should promote other safe sources of energy like solar and wind since the inherent impacts of biofuel may outweighs its usefulness,
- Immediate recall from Africa of all long grain rice imported from the United states unless proven not be contaminated by LLRice601,
- Suspension of rice importation from the United States unless they are accompanied by a valid GM-free certificate,
- All African governments to put in place mechanism to monitor commercial imports of food to ensure that they are not contaminated by GMOs,
- All African must initiate proactive programmes to promote local rice varieties, reduce import dependency and promote food sovereignty.

- African governments make adequate provision for the development of personnel and infrastructure for biosafety regulation and control.

**Signed,** CED/Friends of the Earth, Cameroun ,Friends of the Earth, Ghana  
,Environmental Rights Action/ Friends of the Earth, Nigeria ,Friends of the Earth,  
Togo ,African Centre for Biosafety, South Africa ,Institute of Science in Society  
(ISIS), United Kingdom ,All Nigerian Consumers Movement Union (ANCOMU)  
,Citizens Assistance Centre, Nigeria  
Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN) and the Biological Science Students  
Association, University of Abuja, Nigeria