

Genetically engineered corn causes new plant pest

Testbiotech warns that fields will turn into battlefields
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Large-scale cultivation of genetically engineered corn is causing the spread of a new pest in the US Corn Belt. The western bean cutworm infests the tips of the corn cobs. Massive damage is being reported from those regions where the corn MON810 (sold as YieldGard by company of Monsanto) is grown on large scale.

The genetically engineered corn is clearly suppressing the competitor of the western bean cutworm and thus creating an ecological niche for this insect. At an international conference in Bremen, Germany this Friday, Testbiotech will present a report giving an overview of the current situation.

“Several reports show that the damage is increasing from year to year,” explains Christoph Then, executive director of Testbiotech and author of the report. “But not much information is given to the farmers about the causes. The agrochemical companies are mainly interested in using this as an opportunity to sell other genetically engineered corn and insecticides that are highly toxic.”

On behalf of Greenpeace, Testbiotech analysed many reports on the spread of the western bean cutworm and exchanged opinions with several experts. The cause of the spread of the new pest is hardly known to farmers in US, despite the fact that the western bean cutworm has spread through the whole Corn Belt since the year 2000. Farmers have only been told how to identify infestation and which insecticides they can use. No warnings were given on the dangers of large-scale MON810 cultivation. Instead, companies like Monsanto are trying to sell new varieties of genetically engineered corn such as 'SmartStax' that produces six different insecticides in its plant tissue.

Martin Hofstetter from Greenpeace, Germany, the organization that commissioned the report, has drawn the conclusion that: “There is a race going on in the fields which will lead to an increasing use of insecticides and the cultivation of more and more genetically engineered plants. There is a huge risk of causing ecological damage. Farmers are likely to lose the race by being forced to invest more and more in chemicals and high priced seed without being able to increase their yields. Industry's solution doesn't appear to be either sustainable or ecologically sound. It will just foster extremely industrialized agriculture.”

The report will be available for downloading on Friday, 26 March on www.testbiotech.org [1]

International Conference "[Second International Conference on Implications of GM Crop Cultivation at Large Spatial Scales](#)" [2] in Bremen

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