
United States: International GE tree campaign target International Paper

Genetically engineered trees represent a global threat to native forests and biodiversity as a whole. Traits such as herbicide resistance, insecticide production, rapid growth and reduced lignin content coupled with the inability to maintain sterility virtually assure devastation of forest ecosystems. The purpose of Action for Social and Ecological Justice (ASEJ)'s campaign against GE trees (see WRM Bulletin Nº 69) is to achieve an international ban on the release of genetically engineered trees into the environment including test sites and commercial applications.

Perspectives have looked rather gloomy. But fortunately, there is a burgeoning silver lining to this otherwise sepulchral cloud. GE trees have not yet been approved for commercial production, which could remain 5-10 years away in the U.S. And in January, ASEJ lead a coalition of groups including Dogwood Alliance, Rainforest Action Network, Polaris Institute, NWRAGE, Institute for Social Ecology, Family Farm Defenders, Forest Ethics, National GEAN, and others, in launching an international GE tree campaign targeting International Paper (IP) --one of the world's largest corporate players in GE tree research and development.

IP is the largest private landowner in the U.S., the world's largest seedling grower, and an equal partner, with Meadwestvaco and Rubicon, in Arborgen, a joint venture whose plans are "to actively seek technological advances from independent universities and other companies in order to position itself to market new advances in forest biotechnology to the world's tree growers in the shortest possible time." As well, IP is a funder of TGERC (tree genetic engineering research cooperative) at Oregon State University and the Forest Biotechnology Institute at North Carolina State, and is a 3-time project partner with the U.S. Department of Energy in GE tree research and development.

The campaign officially kicks off at the Agriculture, Science and Biotechnology Ministerial in Sacramento, California, USA, from June 21-25. The event will include a teach-ins, massive march and mobilization, press conferences, and more. This is THE opportunity to link biotechnology, forests, and trade policy prior to the WTO Ministerial in Cancun in September. To find out more or get involved contact Brad Hash below. Stop the threat of GE trees before the genie gets out of the bottle.

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