

# Hybrids, GMO and TNCs

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# Why seed is too important

- Seed is the heart of Agriculture
- It is the regulating factor for the world food chain
- It is essential for crop diversity/biodiversity
- It important factor for the ecosystem & environment
- It governs the peoples' culture

# Why TNCs are eager to control the seed resources

- To conduct monopoly business in agriculture for agrochemicals and other agricultural inputs i.e. Package Technology.
- Political will to control the world food chain in order to control the world politics.

## How they are trying to do that?

- Brushing aside all seeds from the hands of farmers through introducing GM, hybrid and terminator seeds.
- Patenting crop varieties

# Corporate Control Over Seeds

- Five top TNCs (Syngenta, Aventis, Monsanto, BASF, & DuPont) account for nearly two thirds of the commercial seed market in the worlds.
- These companies virtually occupies 100% of the market for GM seeds.
- Monsanto alone occupies 91% of genetic crops of the world.
- Only 3 companies Monsanto, Aventis and Syngenta are controlling the major part of the world agriculture and seed market.

Moreover, there seems a trend of merging within the TNCs to consolidate their monopoly in seeds as well as agro-business.

# Situation in Bangladesh

- During the “Green Revolution” era in early 1960 IRRI promoted High Yielding Variety in Bangladesh coupled with chemical fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation pumps and such inputs either in free or in highly subsidized rate that destructed thousand years’ old self-reliant agricultural system of the country making it fully depended on high cost external inputs.
- At present the farmers of Bangladesh are under growing pressure to use hybrid and GM seeds because of government policies imposed to increase the crop yield anyhow with argument to feed the ever-increasing population of the country.
- On the other hand, the policy makers of the country who are professionally the businessperson in majority are promoting business-oriented agriculture for their own interest.

- A large number of alien species/varieties of different crops have already entered into the ecosystem of the country without proper scientific investigation on their possible impact on the ecosystem and native species.
- Recently Bangladesh has entered into an agreement jointly with Cornell University of USA and USAID to conduct research on Genetically Modified Crops.
- Another research work is going on to develop “Golden Rice” a vitamin-A rich GM variety.
- The corporations have already occupied about 80% of the vegetable and corn seed market and so far 20% of the rice seed market.

## Impact of the Corporate Seed Business in Bangladesh

- The farmers are entrapped into corporate business of agricultural input.
- The seed prices are rapidly growing up day by day and going beyond their purchasing power
- They are facing regular seed crisis manipulated by the business persons.
- They are being touted with bellow quality seeds and experiencing total crop failure.



# TRIPS, UPOV and Farmers' Seed Rights

- TRIPS=Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. It is an agreement of WTO adopted during Uruguay Round of the WTO and took effect since 1995 which was aggravated by the TNCs.
- UPOV= International Union for Protection of New Varieties of Plants. It was adopted in 1961 and entered into force in 1968. It was revised twice in 1978 and 1991. The 1991 revision was essentially tougher than that of 1978 in terms of protecting breeders' rights. It is to note that it was just preceded to TRIPS.

Both the treaties were adopted to ensure the monopoly ownership of the commercial plant breeder to a newly developed variety through offering patent on that variety.

- The Article 27.3(b) of TRIPS requires all of its member countries to protect intellectual property either by patent law or by an **effective *sui generes* system**.
- The word “effective” restricts the freedom of choice for the member countries to adopt *sui generes* system that might be best for the situation and needs of the respective countries.
- The industrialized countries putting pressure on the LDCs and DCs to adopt UPOV 1991 version as the **effective *sui generes* system** which was adopted during negotiations on TRIPS in Uruguay Round of GATT.

- But, Bangladesh is one of the contracting parties of Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD) that recognizes the peoples' rights of access to genetic resources.
- The Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) also recognizes peoples' rights of access to genetic resources. It also recognizes the past, present and future contributions of framers in all regions of the world in conserving, improving and making available these resources, and affirms that this constitutes the basis of Farmers' Rights.

But, very unfortunately, unlike TRIPS, these two treaties do not have an enforcement mechanism.

Despite the continuous pressure from the industrialized countries Bangladesh has not adopted yet UPOV as so called effective sui generis system. Rather, Bangladesh has formulated a Plant Variety Act that protects farmers' rights to indigenous varieties, benefit sharing of the farmers and restricts the entrance of hybrid and GM varieties to some extent, but unfortunately, taking no effect.

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THANKS TO ALL