

Seeds of Change: Farmers, Biotechnology, and the New Face of Agriculture

About the Film

Everyone has heard both the positives and negatives of genetically modified crops, from biotech companies like Monsanto and from environmental and consumer groups like Greenpeace, yet no one has actually heard from those who actually grow the food we eat – the farmers.

"Around the world, Canada or Ethiopia, it's the same: farmers have been kept out of the loop in terms of the development of new technologies."

–Author and researcher Pat Roy Mooney, quoted in the film

The newly released film *Seeds of Change*, a seventy-minute documentary film made by University of Manitoba (U of M) professor Stéphane McLachlan, U of M PhD student Ian Mauro, and independent videographer Jim Sanders, is a balanced yet hard-hitting exposé of the controversy surrounding genetically modified crops and how they have changed the face of agriculture in western Canada.

"It works on both sides – you have the extreme groups on the anti-GMO [side], you also have big business...telling you something else on the other side. We're stuck in the middle..."

–Farmer Greg Goldsborough, quoted in the film

This fast paced and moving film documents the views of western Canadian farmers on both the benefits and risks associated with using GM crops.

"...if you want to find out if [GM crops] are dangerous or not just watch the Canadians. [We're] doing the experiment for [everybody else]. We have been involved in a massive experiment for over five years now. GMOs are in the food stream and we've never given our consent."

–Geneticist David Suzuki, quoted in the film

The farmer focus of the *Seeds of Change* video provides an opportunity to hear firsthand accounts of the good, the bad and the

ugly of GM crops from those who are most affected by the new crops' impacts on agriculture and rural life. It is especially critical of the impacts that biotech giant Monsanto and its products are having on farmers and rural communities across the Canadian west.

"My rights as a farmer have been taken away because now I can no longer grow canola under fear of a lawsuit by Monsanto, unless I grow Monsanto's Roundup Ready canola."

-Farmer Percy Schmeiser, quoted in the film

"Our film addresses the biotechnology industry and how it has changed the face of agriculture. As such it has great relevance for stakeholders around the world – activists, industry people, policymakers, and farmers not least among them," states video researcher Stéphane McLachlan.

This video is the first of its kind in the world, which is in large part facilitated by the fact that North America is the mostly unwilling grand experiment for GM crops. Moreover, *Seeds of Change* is located in the realworld insights of the producers who have the most experience with this technology.

"It's the first time that the risks associated with GM crops have been assessed from the views and experiences of farmers, those at greatest risk and the very people who should be at the forefront of this important public policy debate", states video researcher, Ian Mauro.

Importantly, the video makes explicit connections between rural decline and technology developments that do little to address the plight of farmers across North America and across the rest of the globe.

"The documentary will facilitate communication among farmers and the residents of rural communities regarding the effects of the new technologies associated with GM Crops and issues of rural decline," states video researcher Jim Sanders.

"I don't think it will stop, but it will keep getting worse...Yard lights are going to get a lot further apart every year...It's too bad"

-Ex-farmer Murray Skayman, quoted in the film

Along with farmer perspectives, the video also features interviews with representatives from agri-business, with scientists studying GM crops, and with activists like Vandana Shiva, David Suzuki, and Percy Schmeiser.

"There are absolutely no real serious environmental negative impacts that have occurred to date from the introduction of fifteen million hectares or a hundred and twenty million acres of farmland which are now planted in GM crops"

Corporate Spokesman Patrick Moore, quoted in the film

Just as the content of *Seeds of Change* is controversial, the production of the film was mired in its own controversy, as the filmmakers spent three long years battling with the U of M administration to bring this important documentary film before the public. This occurred while the university was secretly negotiating with biotech giant Monsanto to have the company's Canadian headquarters established in the university's "SmartPark" complex.

Seeds of Change has been shown across Canada, and international screening dates are coming up. On the *Seeds of Change* website, www.seedsofchange.org, you'll find the background story of how the U of M impeded the public release of this film for three years, a summary of the research that informs the film, opportunities to take action on the issues raised in *Seeds of Change*, and other information and resources of interest.

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