



MEDIA STATEMENT

For immediate release
27 August 2018

**BioAfrica Convention:
Open for the business of profit;
closed to the questions that matter**

This week the biotechnology industry meets at the Durban International Convention Centre. Themed “Africa – Open for business” the Convention will explore various ways in which African biodiversity can be exploited for agriculture, industry and health by providing a platform for stakeholders in the biotechnology environment. The Convention is co-hosted by AfricaBio, the Technology Innovation Agency and the South African Department of Science and Technology, with primary sponsorship from DuPont, Syngenta and MSQ Health.¹

What is clear from the programme and exorbitant participation fees is that they will not be building the Bio-Economy together with the communities whose resources and knowledge will be exploited. There has been no attempt to open the content or participation to civil society voices that might challenge the neo-colonial agenda, or the neoliberal approach to commodifying and privatising nature and traditional knowledge, an approach which also contravenes the essence of African belief systems which centralise communal ownership and benefit.

In co-hosting the event with industry mouthpiece AfricaBio – whose membership includes global biotech giants such as Bayer-Monsanto, Syngenta and DuPont – the South African government is ensuring that critical social, environmental, ethical, health and economic concerns are swept under the carpet. These include concerns about genetically modified crops and related herbicides that have already been foisted on farmers and the public. They include concerns about the obdurate belief that technological solutions are a “silver bullet”. And they include concerns about the lack of imagination for alternative and decolonial agricultural futures that build on farmers’ knowledge rather than supporting Trojan Horse projects such as the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) Project, which present false solutions for drought tolerance.

In so doing, South Africa is complicit in pressuring other African governments to accept technology packages that ultimately benefit these multinationals, while society, the farmer and consumers bear the brunt of negative impacts.

(more)

¹ See <https://bioafricaconvention.com/> for details

We, the undersigned civil society organisations and individuals, reject this agenda to commodify our natural resources and traditional knowledge while displacing these with increasingly risky and untested technologies for the benefit of global capital.

ORGANISATIONS

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- **African Centre for Biodiversity**
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- Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC)
- GreenHouse People's Environmental Centre
- Mopani Farmers Association
- South African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI)
- South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO)
- Surplus People Project

NETWORKS

- No GMO South Africa
- Seed Freedom SA
- Seed sovereignty South Africa
- Resistance is fertile SA
- Toxic Free community

INDIVIDUALS

- Andile Gaelesiwe – media personality
- Busisiwe Mgangxela – agroecology farmer
- Rushka Johnson – small-scale farmer, environmental activist and seed guardian

(ENDS)