

INF'OGM : PRESENTATION OF OUR ORGANISATION

I. General presentation

Inf'OGM is a non-profit organization, created in 1999 in order to establish a francophone citizen watch on the GMO issue.

It deals with all GMO related current news in the world, and publishes in French synthesis, analyses, WEB pages and a monthly bulletin which are distributed in all francophone countries (France, Belgium, Switzerland, Quebec, The Maghreb, Central and Western Africa). Inf'OGM collaborates with all civil society organizations and its members come from the main organizations participating in the debate on GMOs in France.

In the spirit of "public service", Inf'OGM participates in the elaboration of the basic elements necessary to the establishment of a real social dialogue. It puts pressure on public authorities to provide information with transparency and to establish an efficient and trustworthy public service of information on GMOs.

Finally, Inf'OGM is involved in workshops, seminars and symposiums and organizes and runs training programs for different publics in Europe and Africa (journalists, farmers, militants, elected representatives...).

After having published a monthly bulletin (11 issues per year), Inf'OGM is now publishing, since July 2007, a bimonthly 8 page bulletin. There are 6 issues per year. The first issue of Inf'OGM came out in 1999. In August 2008 will be published the 94th issue.

Inf'OGM is also publishing, since July 2007, a monthly issue, more "technical" and available only through emails.

In January 2001 we started publishing special files in our issues dealing with a different subject every time. The subjects are picked out according to different criteria such as a delicate question of current interest, a synthetic piece of work on a large issue, the translation of a non French publication, or an original research resulting in a new analysis shedding light on the issue.

Owing to the enlargement of the team of employees, in 2003 Inf'OGM started developing a journalistic research on different subjects such as the assessment of political and scientific dynamics regarding studies about the use of GMOs in animal products ; a survey on the effective appointment of members of the CGB (French Commission of biomolecular engineering) ; a query to the French and European public authorities about their assessment of the results of the tests carried out in the fields of England (report of October 2003)...

II - Development of Inf'OGM's activities.

Inf'OGM's audience and activities have been steadily increasing since its establishment five years ago. At present the association is working on strengthening its network and the efficiency of its thematic tools.

► A French team for consultation with citizens on GMOs (made up of the following associations : ATTAC, BEDE, Confédération Paysanne, Coordination Nationale de Défense des Semences Fermières (National Coordination for the Protection of Farming Crops), Le Fondation Science Citoyenne, France Nature Environnement, Frapna Ardèche, Geysier, Groupe International d'Etudes Transdisciplinaire, Greenpeace, Mouvement pour le Droit et le Respect des Générations Futures (The Movement for the Right and the Respect of Future Generations), Nature & Progrès and Solagral) was created in 2003 in order to edit a file containing arguments against GMOs (" GMOs : civil society argues its refusal ") and to demand a public debate. This document has been the occasion for joint and enriching work, giving people working on GMOs the chance to get to know

each other and therefore to improve their collaboration for the future. The document tackles scientific questions (lacunae or risks), the question of patent on life, of the economy, of communication between corporations, of liability, of hunger in the world, of research governance and of the impact on agricultural systems. InfOGM was at first involved in this dynamic as information provider and as secretariat for the editing of the file on arguments. Since, the follow-up of the editorial work has been in the hands of InfOGM and Geysler.

► Teams of opposition to GMOs have been set up in several departments in France (the list of these teams and information on means to contact them are available on http://www.infogm.org/spip.php?action=redirect&id_article=696). In order to provide a better proximity service to the active teams, InfOGM participates in many regional events, as it did at the Larzac gathering or during shows and exhibitions (Primevère in Lyon). At present InfOGM is trying to increase the number of watch points and points of distribution of information on GMOs by setting up GMO's local relays. By "relay" we mean a person, member of an organization or a team who would become the corresponding member for the Citizen Watch on GMOs. Since this step has aroused interest, the association InfOGM has accepted to help create these local relay of contact in 2004.

► InfOGM has been establishing contacts with other European networks for several years now. In 2003 InfOGM took part in organizing workshops and seminars for the European Social Forum which took place in Saint Denis in November 2003. In the framework of the CCC-OGM, InfOGM's members and team of employees provided the secretarial work, the coordination and the conduct of an original procedure (intersecting at an European level the GMO networks, farmer seed savers and patents) which has worked remarkably well. The most interesting results were of two kinds :

1) The strengthening of European networks through personal acquaintanceship with their actors (especially with regards to Eastern European countries) and the relationship with GENET (an Anglophone European network) ;

2) A solid corpus of propositions and a final declaration which make up a good political basis for work at the European level (available on http://www.infogm.org/spip.php?action=redirect&id_article=1302).

InfOGM's work concerning Europe and especially the legal watch on European regulations on traceability and labeling (report of October 2003) depicts the central role of the regulation tools of the European Union in the development of GMOs and InfOGM's interest in strengthening its watchfulness on the precise functioning of these regulations.

► **InfOGM is developing activities in Europe.** It is supporting projects regarding the access and the management of information. Since 2005, InfOGM is supporting the implementation of national citizen watchdogs on GMOs in Romania and Bulgaria. Those watchdogs are the first of a kind in those countries and should play a great role in insuring the public to have access to verified, vulgarized and contextualized information. InfOGM is actually aiming at developing such projects in Hungary, Macedonia and Ukraine.

► **InfOGM is developing activities in Africa** in close collaboration with the association BEDE. It is supporting projects regarding the access and the management of information. It is also working along the lines of a gradual establishment of a network of organizations dealing with the issue of GMOs & Africa (GRAIN, IUB, AREA, Enda Third World, etc...) in order to set up a francophone watch on GMOs in Africa. InfOGM has taken part in the conduct of several workshops on GMOs and biosecurity organized by civil society organizations, in Tunisia, Algeria, Benin, Senegal, Burkina Faso.

Moreover, InfOGM has contributed to several publication projects : a special bulletin Africa (3 published issues) ; radio programs broadcasted by local radio stations in Mali. We have also planned

(but haven't been able to do it so far for lack of means and time) to elaborate a pedagogical report illustrated by African examples.

► **A Legal Watch** : In October 2002 InfOGM and the Confédération Paysanne and many other associations and jurists organised a one day seminar the goal of which was to make an assessment of the existing legislation, to point out the lacunae and to consider new trains of legal thought in order to make suggestions. At the end of the seminar the suggestion was made to establish a network consisting of associations, jurists and lawyers. In May 2003 InfOGM took on a trainee, (whom it hired in November 2003) to set up the legal watch. At present several associations (FNAB, Nature & Progres, Confédération Paysanne (French Farmers Union), Greenpeace, ATTAC, The Biocoop Federation) have chosen to provide financial support for the legal watch.

The main aim of the Legal Watch is to collect and exchange legal information among jurists and associations with regards to aspects relating to GMOs and law, such as current trials/court rulings, municipal decrees and regulations (european, international and those of non EU member States).

III. Others Publications.

During the first two years InfOGM focused on the publication of a monthly bulletin, and later on started elaborating thematic papers (cf. 1b). At present the association has chosen to diversify its communication tools (the publication of pamphlets, a report on arguments, radio programs, pedagogical reports ...).

Owing to our provision and distribution of information to the general public as well as to other organizations (unions, associations, teams...), InfOGM has engaged, as editor or information support provider, in the publication of small brochures.

To date, we have published three small brochures in English :

- GMO's : civil society argues its refusal. The case for a public debate.
- GMOs, patents, Seed Monopolies : Resistance and Proposals for Alternatives in Europe, ESF, Saint-Denis, November 2003.
- The French Law on GMOs: "balanced" or biased ?, InfOGM, July 2008

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