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Is Greenpeace Leadership Changing Gears on Biotech?

Report Categories:

Biotechnology

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Report Highlights:

The new CEO of Greenpeace International stated in a German press interview that he was re-examining the “scientific position” on agricultural biotechnology. Quickly, Greenpeace Germany reprinted selected paragraphs of the interview on its website with clarifications in an attempt to restate the anti-biotech policy of the organization.

General Information:

In a November 30 interview with the German political weekly magazine “Der Spiegel,” Greenpeace International CEO Kumi Naidoo spoke about agricultural biotechnology among a longer list of issues including human rights and environmental policy. In the interview, Naidoo was asked why

Greenpeace opposes Golden Rice which could be to the advantage of children in developing countries. Naidoo responded that he has thought about this issue and concluded that he possesses no scientific experience and therefore he intends to re-examine all the organization's scientific positions. He was quoted as saying "we have to make sure not to miss out on any new and right development."

In reaction to the Spiegel interview the left wing Berlin daily 'taz' wrote that in the past a number of Greenpeace International CEOs made public statements which did not necessarily reflect the organization's opinion.

Greenpeace Germany Reaction to the Naidoo Interview

Apparently Naidoo's statements do not match Greenpeace Germany position on agricultural biotechnology. As a result, Greenpeace Germany re-published selected paragraphs of the "Der Spiegel" interview with several additions which look like clarifications by Naidoo.

These clarifications say that Greenpeace continuously reconsiders its position. In particular, the comment on the Greenpeace Germany web site says that new scientific findings are reflected in the organization's position on agricultural biotechnology. The authors of the comments try to clarify that genetically engineered plants are a threat to the environment and to humans. Additionally Greenpeace Germany claims the patenting of biotech events makes farmers dependent to the technology provider. Finally Greenpeace Germany's web site rephrases Naidoo's original statement in the "Der Spiegel" interview on Golden Rice in that way that golden rice would not provide a solution to the vitamin A deficiency.

Comment

By partially re-publishing the Naidoo interview with "Der Spiegel" Greenpeace Germany has raised interesting questions. Most importantly it demonstrates a potential disagreement within the organization itself about the need to consider the advances and the role that agricultural biotechnology, among many other advances, will play in addressing agricultural challenges and food security in the future.