

THE DANGERS OF GENETICALLY ENGINEERED TREES

BY GLOBAL JUSTICE ECOLOGY PROJECT



Forests are more than just trees; they regulate and stabilize water flow and weather patterns, enrich soils, prevent erosion, and sequester carbon. They provide food, medicine, shelter, livelihoods, recreation and sanctuary for peoples around the world. They support many different forms of life. Yet they are complex, diverse and interactive systems that we barely understand.

But now the very existence of forests and the communities and life that depend on them is threatened by the corporate and government funded development of genetically engineered trees to be grown in large plantations for the pulp/paper, bioenergy and biochemical industries.

GE TREES INTENSIFY THE DAMAGE DONE BY INDUSTRIAL TREE PLANTATIONS.

Some argue that GE trees would protect forests by growing more wood on less land, but a study by the UN FAO proves this is false. GE trees would lead to the expansion of plantations because gains in productivity would make them more profitable. They would thus worsen the documented social and ecological impacts of industrial tree plantations.

What's wrong with tree plantations? They are not forests. Monoculture tree plantations consist of vast expanses of trees, all the same age and species, often alien to the region. They do not support biodiversity. Moreover, plantations displace Indigenous Peoples and local communities. They also

contaminate air, water and soil with toxic agrochemicals. Finally, tree plantations contribute to climate change as they store less carbon than native forests.

GE TREES ARE A CENTRAL PART OF THE ONGOING, DANGEROUS PUSH TO PROMOTE INDUSTRIAL SCALE BIOENERGY AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO FOSSIL FUELS.

Industry plans to monopolize land and water to grow GE tree plantations in order to replace a small percentage of fossil fuels, but this will come with high costs, including worsening human rights abuses, accelerating loss of biodiversity, and intensifying global water, food and climate crises. We do not need false solutions that create more problems; we need real, just solutions. The development of genetically engineered (GE) trees for bioenergy is another step in the wrong direction.

GE TREES WOULD CAUSE DAMAGE TO FORESTS AND LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS.

Genetic contamination of forests by GE trees would be inevitable and irreversible. GE trees could contaminate forests with harmful traits like reduced lignin and insecticide. Moreover, GE trees are often developed from non-native, invasive species, like the highly flammable, invasive, and water-depleting eucalyptus tree, which could invade forest ecosystems. Overall, the impacts of contamination are highly unpredictable due to the instability of genetic engineering and complexity of forest ecosystems.

GE TREES WOULD HARM LOCAL AND GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEMS.

GE trees threaten food sovereignty since land grabs for GE tree plantations would further displace small scale and subsistence agriculture.

GE trees, especially those engineered to constantly produce insecticide, would impact pollinators, other non-target insects, and birds as well as beneficial predators – all crucial

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for food production and the food chain. They would also likely result in insecticide-resistant pests, leading to the use of more toxic pesticides.

Some trees being genetically engineered – including the American chestnut, citrus, apple and oil palm – are sources of food. The health impacts of eating foods from such GE trees are unknown. Moreover, GE trees could contaminate other food produced nearby, including fruit and honey, threatening health and local farmers' access to global markets.

GE TREES ARE PART OF THE CORPORATE CAPTURE AND COMMODIFICATION OF NATURE.

Small farmers, forest dependent communities and Indigenous Peoples are threatened both by land grabs for GE tree plantations and by the impacts on forests, water and soil from the GE trees and the toxic agrochemicals used on the plantations. National policies and international trade regimes largely promote the development and deployment of industrial tree plantations and GE trees for the short-term economic

benefit of a few transnational corporations – including ArborGen and FuturaGene – to the long-term detriment of many.

OUR WORK

GJEP has made preventing the release of GE trees central to our work since we started in 2003. This work comes from decades of experience in the environmental and social justice movements, on local, national and international fronts. GE trees are truly a key point of intersection in GJEP's work to bring together issues of social justice, ecology, and economic domination.

The goal of our NO GE Trees Program is to protect native forests, and to defend the rights of forest dependent communities, small farmers, and Indigenous Peoples against the uncontrollable and irreversible threats posed by the release of GE trees.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Check out nogetrees.org to learn more about the social and ecological dangers of GE trees and our efforts to combat them in the US and globally. If on the GJEP main page, start by clicking our No GE Trees tab. If you can, also consider making a donation. All of the ways you can donate are on our website.
- Sign our petition rejecting GE trees by going to the STOP GE Trees website, <http://stopgetrees.org/petition-to-ban-planting-ge-trees/> or finding the link on GJEP's No GE Trees Take Action page, nogetrees.org.
- Contact GJEP by calling (716) 931-5833 or emailing us at info@globaljusticeecology.org

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