

Asian Network Mounts Week-long Protest vs Golden Rice

By [Stop Golden Rice Network](#)

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Stop Golden Rice Network (SGRN) will be launching its week long activity to protest the possible commercialization of Golden Rice this week. The campaign will comprise different sets of activities per day and will conclude on August 8, the “International Day of Action Against Golden Rice.” Now in its 7th year, the said day of action is to commemorate the historic event when more than 400 farmers, urban poor, youths, and consumers uprooted Golden Rice in Pili, Camarines Sur back in 2013. With the theme “Defend our Rice, Fight for our Rights,” the week-long protest aims to raise the public’s awareness of the “recent developments in Golden Rice and the current corporate agenda to food and agriculture amid COVID-19.”

SGRN is a regional campaign network geared towards strengthening network support and campaign collaboration against the onslaught of corporate control in food and agriculture. It has more than 30 members coming from India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Philippines, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand and Sri Lanka among others, as well as several regional formations forwarding food sovereignty and campaigning against corporate control on food and agriculture.

“The pandemic exposed what we feared a long time ago – that our food system has become so flawed and weak, it will inevitably fail to sustain our needs,” said **Cris Panerio**, National Coordinator of farmer-scientist group MASIPAG.

In a recent post on the MASIPAG page, the farmer-scientist network collated statistics on the state of food security of the Philippines. It includes data from the Social Weather Stations pointing out to a whopping 4.2 million Filipino families who experienced involuntary hunger in the three-month government-imposed lockdown.

International movement of grassroots group [People’s Coalition on Food Sovereignty](#) (PCFS) also released a statement saying

“the signs are clear that food security amid the global pandemic is a time bomb if not addressed with a strong resolve to uphold the right to food and peoples’ welfare.”

“There are enough reasons to safely conclude that multinational corporations are exploiting the dire situation of our food system during COVID-19 as a pretext for further greedy gains,” Mr. Cris Panerio, MASIPAG National

Coordinator, revealed.

According to Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific, [Bayer](#) and [Corteva AgriScience](#) backed the Philippine government's agricultural program "Plant, Plant, Plant." This program has been hugely criticized by different farmer organizations and alliances to be prone to corruption. Bayer announced plans in March to [penetrate the market in Mindanao](#) (Southern Philippines) with a new product, [Vt Double Pro Dekalb](#), which is genetically modified to be glyphosate-tolerant and resistant to the fall armyworm.

GM Free NZ noted that a variety of genetically engineered (GE) corn developed to survive spraying with up to twelve different pesticides risks exposing consumers in New Zealand or Australia to increased levels of toxic chemicals. Bayer Crop Science has applied to Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) for approval of the most extreme 'gene-stacked' food ever grown. Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is calling for submissions on the latest GM corn MON 87429, resistant to the toxic sprays: glyphosate, dicamba, glufosinate, 2,4-D and eight aryloxyphenoxypropionate group herbicides ('FOPs'). The seed is also coated with the systemic bee-killing neonicotinoid insecticide. GM Free NZ has also campaigned against the safety approval of Golden Rice last 2018.

In India, despite a moratorium on GM Bt eggplant was imposed last 2010, several GM crops are being planted without authorization from the government. According to a report, the government is investigating the distribution of illegally procured herbicide-tolerant Bt cotton seeds to pave way for the acceptance of the said crop. GM mustard and Bt Eggplant is still being relentlessly pushed for commercialization. In Bangladesh, news circulated that Golden Rice will approved by the Biosafety Core Committee under the environment ministry last November 15, 2019. While there were no updates yet, proponents are optimistic that the approval of the application in Bangladesh is very likely to push through. In August 2019, it was confirmed that Indonesia rice research centre (BB Padi) have grown Golden Rice in their testing field in Sukamandi, West Java.

Kartini Samon of research group GRAIN is wary of the growing influence of corporations on the local and international institutions on food and agriculture. "Global research on biofortified crops like GM provitamin A rice is led by the CGIAR system, which is the single biggest recipient of grants from the Gates Foundation. CGIAR has spent \$500 million on biofortification since 2002. Of this, about \$100 million has been spent on efforts to develop GM rice high in provitamin A. Money from the Gates Foundation is providing CGIAR and its Green Revolution model a new lease on life, this time in direct partnership with seed and pesticide companies" said GRAIN.

"We are in a global crisis. And we have no one else to blame but the tycoons behind programs that reoriented our agriculture, from a sustainable, need-based production into a profiteering business venture at the expense of millions of citizens across the globe," Panerio added.

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