

UNDER ATTACK:

Farmers' rights to save, re-use, and sell seed

Abundance of seeds and foods form the base of our agriculture and the base of our civilization. Our seeds have been carefully selected and improved by hundreds of generations of farmers. And that careful selection and improvement relied on farmers' rights to save, re-use, and exchange seeds. *Those rights are under attack.*

Proposed changes to Canada's seed laws, increased use of contracts restricting seed use, and a proliferation of gene patents are taking away farmers' rights to save, re-use, and exchange seeds. These changes criminalize the age-old, customary practices of farmers.

This loss of farmers' rights harms farm families. And by making it harder for public universities and research institutes to access seeds and genetic material, this takeover of our seed supply threatens to impede innovation in plant breeding—further hurting farmers and the Canadian economy as a whole.

Monsanto and other seed companies are pushing these damaging changes to Canada's seed system. The latest thrust by seed companies and their supporters is the **Seed Sector Review**. Part of that Review is a proposal for new laws that would **force farmers to pay royalties whenever they saved and re-used their own seeds on their own farms.**

(See NFU Fact Sheet # 2 for more on the Seed Sector Review)

The Seed Sector Review also recommends tightening up Canada's Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) legislation to give seed companies additional years of royalty payments—a profit windfall for the companies but a costly blow to farmers. *(See Fact Sheet # 4 for more on Plant Breeders' Rights).*

Finally, to protect farmers' rights to their seeds, we need a well-funded, public, not-for-profit plant breeding program. If we, as a nation, withdraw from plant breeding, then foreign transnationals will own and control all new seeds. *(See Fact Sheet # 3 on a public plant breeding system for Canada)*

Our seeds are created by farmers, not by Monsanto

Of the 1,000 most important commercial crops in North America, only a tiny handful are originally native to this continent—these include Jerusalem artichoke, cranberries, and sunflowers but *none of the major grain crops grown here*. Thus, North American agriculture rests upon seeds brought by farmers, indigenous peoples, and government bodies from around the world, introduced into North America, and adapted to our growing conditions. All this happened before the ascendancy of large seed companies.

Farmers, indigenous people, governments, and our public research institutions created the seeds upon which we rely. Now, transnational seed companies are trying to put restrictions on farmers in order to increase these companies' profits and to protect their rights to "their" seeds.

They want to force you to pay every time you save and re-use your own seed on your own farm.

The flipside of this flyer lists actions you can take to safeguard our seed supply.

Work with us to protect YOUR RIGHT to save, re-use, exchange, and sell seeds

The **National Farmers Union (NFU)** is fighting back on behalf of farm families and all Canadians who believe that the seeds of life are too important to be controlled by foreign transnationals. The NFU has launched an aggressive campaign that includes the following actions:

- Ads in major farm newspapers;
- Trade show displays to help inform farmers;
- A rural canvass to inform and organize farmers;
- Meetings with legislators;
- An NFU National Convention focused on seeds and farmers' rights (November 18-20, 2004 in Saskatoon);
- Meetings with urban allies to forge a rural/urban coalition around this issue;
- Press conferences, meetings with editorial boards, and other media work; and
- A petition to the federal parliament demanding that the government enshrine in legislation farmers' rights to save, re-use, select, exchange, and sell their seeds and that the government support farmers and the Canadian economy by expanding Canada's public plant breeding programs.

You can help in four ways:

1. Join the NFU. Working together, farmers can retain control of their seed supply.
2. Donate to our work. Your donation will help finance our work on this issue.
3. Spread the word. Talk to your neighbors and pass on this information.
4. Help collect signatures on our petition to parliament.

Petitions, fact sheets and additional information are available by calling, writing, faxing, visiting, or emailing the NFU office.

For two decades, the NFU has worked to maximize farmers' access to productive and affordable new seed varieties. Please join us to protect Canadian family farms and to create better food and agricultural policies for Canada.

To join, please send a cheque for \$150 to the address below.



NFU National Office

2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, Sask., S7K 4B6

Tel (306) 652-9465 / Fax (306) 664-6226 / Email nfu@nfu.ca