

To,
The Prime Minister,
Government of India
Prime Minister's Office
E Block,
Central Secretariat,
New Delhi, Delhi 110011

ANNA SWARAJ



Ref: Threat to our Food Sovereignty (Anna Swaraj): Illegal import of GMOs, illegal spread of Roundup Ready Bt Cotton in India, and unnecessary imports of pulses and oilseeds with residues of cancer causing Roundup

Hon Prime Minister,

We write to you in anguish because our food sovereignty and our right to safe, healthy, biodiverse, nutritionally rich and balanced food is being severely undermined by recent acts by the government.

Our government seems to be in a rush to put the profits of MNC's above the food sovereignty of India, the livelihoods of Indian farmers and women, and the right to safe and healthy food of the Indian people.

As we prepare to remember Gandhi on his 150th Birth Anniversary, let us remember what he said about food freedom and food sovereignty:

“The first lesson we must learn is of self-help and self reliance. if we assimilate this lesson, we shall at once free ourselves from disastrous dependence upon foreign countries and ultimate bankruptcy. This is not said in arrogance but as a matter of fact. We are not a small place, dependent for our food supply upon outside help. We are a sub-continent, a nation of nearly 400 millions (now 1.3 billion). We are country of mighty rivers and a rich variety of agricultural land....”

We would add that we are a country of rich biodiversity and rich knowledge. We are the source of all sustainable agriculture traditions including organic agriculture. Women of India have both a vision and practical knowledge for creating Anna Swaraj: a Food Sovereign India.

While our farmers grow a diversity of safe, healthy, GMO free food, we are unnecessarily importing Roundup Sprayed pulses and processed food with GMOs. We can feed two times India's population with biodiverse nutrition sensitive organic agriculture as Navdanya's study "Health per Acre" has shown.

The unnecessary and illegal imports of GMOs and food grains with Roundup imports are destroying the livelihoods of our farmers and women in the indigenous self organised, "swadeshi" food economy and the "swastha" of our people.

Women's leadership is vital to creating a food sovereign and food secure India. Women are the foundation of our health security and food security. On 9th August, 2018 on Quit India Day we women in the Mahila Anna Swaraj movement have declared in our commitment to build on Gandhiji's legacy of *swaraj*, *swadeshi* and *satyagraha* so that we are *swashakt* to fight for *swad* and *swasthya* in our food and nutrition.

Over the last few years, while our farmers have not been able to sell the diverse pulses they grow, India has increasingly become dependent on imports of Roundup sprayed pulses, just like we were made dependent on imports on edible oils after 1998, the forced shutting down of our "ghanis" and indigenous cold pressed healthy edible oils.

Imported pulses also have Roundup residues.

The spread of Roundup through imports as well as through illegal spread of Roundup Ready Bt Cotton in India is a major threat to the health of the Indian people. The WHO, Roundup classified Roundup (glyphosate) as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A).

In spite of the manipulation of scientific evidence and institutions, the evidence is finally reaching the courts.

On Aug. 10, the jury ruled that Monsanto's Roundup weedkiller had caused Dewayne Johnson's cancer. Johnson, a 46-year-old former groundskeeper used to spray Roundup to maintain the grounds. The jury ordered Monsanto pay \$289m to the victim.



8000 more cases have been filed in the USA by cancer victims.

A recent report from CSE has shown that 32% of all imported processed food, including infant food, has GMOs. This is illegal.

When illegal imports take place our government should stop these imports, remove all such food items from the shelf and destroy them, and take punitive action against all persons violating our laws, as well as act strictly against the regulatory authorities that are failing to carry out their duties.

Instead of preventing illegal imports, the FSSAI is now in a rush to legalise the illegal import of GMOs. Instead of taking care of the health of Indian citizens, the FSSAI is protecting those who are undermining our laws and our health.

The head of FSSAI is misleading the public in stating that there is no evidence of harm from GMOs. He has also misled India in putting 5% GMOs as "GMO free" in his proposed labelling laws, contrary to world standards.

There are many global studies which show there is no scientific consensus on safety of GMOs.

Illegal imports of GMOs and Roundup laced food should be immediately stopped, and strict action taken against the violators. Besides the illegal import of GMOs, there is an illegal spread of Roundup and Roundup Ready Bt Cotton in India. We have a regulatory agency, GEAC, under the Ministry of Environment which is supposed to prevent any unapproved GMO release.

The Hon Minister of Environment, Dr Harsh Vardhan, has already been informed about this illegality, yet GEAC has failed to act according to the RULES FOR THE MANUFACTURE, USE, IMPORT, EXPORT AND STORAGE OF HAZARDOUS MICRO ORGANISMS GENETICALLY ENGINEERED ORGANISMS OR CELLS (the 5th December, 1989 notified under the EP Act, 1986).

India is at a fragile moment for the future of its food, health and knowledge sovereignty. We are on the verge of being recolonised through a new Food Imperialism, or alternatively, we can have a resurgence of Anna Swaraj through rejuvenating our biodiversity and our nutritious, healthy food cultures.

We hope our government will work with us to take care of our fertile land and our hardworking annadatas, listen to the voice of our Mahila Shakti, the backbone of our society and our food and nutrition sovereignty, and to create a food sovereign Jarvik Bharat. We call on you to stop the entry of GMO foods and Roundup sprayed pulses and edible oils, and build on indigenous alternatives which can provide fair incomes to our farmers and a healthy diet to the last child.

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DIVERSE WOMEN FOR DIVERSITY



MAHILA ANNA SWARAJ

