no patents on seeds

European Patent Office boosts its business with Patents on Life: New patent granted on tomatoes derived from classical breeding

25 August 2015 / A monopoly on specific tomatoes with a higher content of healthy compounds known as flavonols was granted by the European Patent Office (EPO) to the Swiss company Syngenta. The patent covers the plants, the seeds and the fruits. Patent EP1515600 describes the crossing of wild tomatoes with domesticated varieties. The plants are not genetically engineered but derived from classical breeding.

European patent law prohibits patents on plant varieties and on methods of classical breeding. However, in March 2015, the EPO took the decision that patents on plant seeds and fruits derived from classical breeding can be patented. The EPO, which increases its own revenue by granting patents, has chosen this unacceptable interpretation of patent law to try and pave the way for its own interests as well as those of industry. This EPO decision has provoked various political reactions: The Netherlands has announced a political initiative at EU level, whereas Germany and France are named amongst those countries willing to join forces to stop the EPO. Already in 2012, the European Parliament demanded that the EPO stop granting these patents.

“By granting these patents, the EPO is ignoring the interests of the general public and simply serving the interests of the patent lobby. If this continues we will all become more and more dependent on a few big international corporates such as Monsanto, Syngenta and Dupont, that file more and more patents on our food plants,” Christoph Then for *No Patents on Seeds!* “What we now need is a clear statement from our government to say that they will get actively curb the practices of the EPO. Otherwise we will all see the sell-out of the resources needed for our daily food.”

No Patents on Seeds! demands that the European governments raise the issue in the Administrative Council of the EPO, which is the only body with any political control over the Patent Office. By networking amongst governments, it is possible to stop the EPO from granting further such patents within a relatively short period of time.

A recent call made by the international coalition *No Patents on Seeds!* to stop these patents is supported by several hundred organisations all over Europe. The coalition *No Patents on Seeds!* is supported by Bionext (Netherlands), The Berne Declaration (Switzerland), GeneWatch (UK), Greenpeace, Misereor (Germany), Development Fund (Norway), No Patents on Life (Germany), Red de Semillas (Spain), Rete Semi Rurali (Italy), Reseau Semences Paysannes (France) and Swissaid (Switzerland). They are all calling for a revision of European Patent Law to exclude breeding material, plants and animals and food derived thereof from patentability.

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The patent: http://no-patents-on-seeds.org/en/information/patent-cases/tomatoes-higher-content-healthy-compounds