

Some highlights of GRAIN activities & achievements

Each year, GRAIN produces a detailed annual activity report, which is available on request. Below, we briefly present some highlights of our activities and achievements of the past few years.

Information work

GRAIN's information work is the result of regular monitoring, research and inhouse analysis produced collectively by GRAIN staff. GRAIN's analysis is widely regarded as unique, trustworthy and relevant. Our information work reaches the public both through regular publications such as *Seedling*, *Semences* or *Biodiversidad*, as well as irregular outputs such as *Against the grain*, briefings, blogs, videos, BIO-IPR, etc. (See box.) All of them are available from, and get actively used through, GRAIN's website, which received half a million unique visitors during 2008.

Some examples of GRAIN's recent information outputs include:

- **A new Green Revolution for Africa?** When the Gates and Rockefeller foundations teamed up in 2006 to launch the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), GRAIN produced a first analysis examining how this would result in the privatisation of Africa's seeds and a massive increase in chemical fertiliser and pesticides use. In 2007, we followed up with a deeper analysis of what this new Green Revolution really signifies, why such projects haven't worked before and why AGRA won't work either. At the same time GRAIN's Africa staff worked with in the field with civil society organisations throughout Africa and participated in meetings with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food to help develop a more sustainable way forward for Africa to feed herself.
- **Agribusiness takes over Latin America?** During 2007, GRAIN documented and published three issues of *Against the grain* on how multinational corporations like Monsanto and others are increasingly taking control of agriculture in Latin America. Small farmers' organisations are denouncing the grave harm that ten years of GM crops have wrought in rural areas and on native seeds, and the enormous damage that the resulting increase in the use of toxic herbicides has inflicted on rural communities. GRAIN's Latin America staff worked with them to develop and push for agroecological alternatives.
- **Hybrid rice for Asia?** For some years, GRAIN has been monitoring the expansion of hybrid rice. China developed and is the largest producer of hybrid rice, but little has been known about the impact of the switch to hybrids on farmers. Were yields higher? Were farmers better off? Was the country losing its traditional rice varieties? GRAIN's Asia staff talked to rice farmers in the Chinese provinces of Yunnan and Sichuan to find out, and the results were published in a detailed analysis in the January 2007 issue of *Seedling*. We also produced a version in Mandarin, for use by partners in China, and a photo essay which became a highly visited section on our website. Throughout 2007-2008 we actively published new analysis on our hybrid rice blog, to keep people informed about new developments.
- **A different understanding of bird flu:** In 2007, when the bird flu epidemic reached Europe's shores and suddenly became a global concern, GRAIN published an important briefing that demonstrated how large-scale industrial poultry operations, and not backyard chickens, were the cause of the problem. We followed this up with several further investigative articles, and worked with affected small farmers in Asia and Africa to develop alternatives.
- **Unmasking the food crisis.** GRAIN was one of the first groups to provide a comprehensive analysis of the fundamental causes behind the global food crisis that exploded in early 2008. We produced a series of briefings, articles and other materials that highlighted the role of 30 years of neoliberal economic policies and the importance of speculative capital in the rising food prices, resulting in increased corporate profits while the number of people officially going hungry each day passed the one billion mark. We also dug

GRAIN's publications

- **Seedling:** GRAIN's quarterly magazine and flagship publication. Each issue contains an editorial, 3-4 articles, book reviews, interviews and much more. *Seedling* is written both by GRAIN staff and outside collaborators.
- **Against the grain:** a series of short opinion pieces on recent trends and developments in the issues that GRAIN works on. Each one focuses on a specific and timely topic.
- **Briefings:** substantial research reports, providing in-depth background information and analysis on a given topic. GRAIN briefings are written by GRAIN staff, sometimes in collaboration with other organisations or individuals.
- **Biodiversidad:** a quarterly magazine produced jointly by GRAIN and a coalition of Latin American civil society organisations. [Spanish]
- **Semences de la biodiversité:** a monthly bulletin providing news and analysis on agricultural biodiversity relevant to Francophone Africa. Each issue focuses on one subject. [French]

behind the response from governments and development agencies -- more hybrid seeds and more chemical fertilisers -- to draw attention to how it would affect local biodiversity. In late 2008, we issued a ground-breaking report on a new trend launched by food-insecure countries and the ailing finance industry to massively start buying up or leasing farmland in poor countries to secure the food market. GRAIN's materials were widely used by the mainstream media (e.g. Al Jazeera, The Guardian, El Pais, Agence France-Presse) and formed the basis for a better understanding of what was really going on.

The results of GRAIN's information work -- both formal publications and the many ad hoc and informal outputs -- go deep and wide. Because a lot of our information work is produced collectively with partners in the regions, its dissemination and use are immediate and intense. In 2007, an external evaluation of GRAIN's information work was conducted. One of its conclusions was the following:

GRAIN's information outputs are prodigious: for a small team scattered internationally, the information they provide to those who defend biodiversity is considerable and it is widely used. On the whole, GRAIN's outputs are found to be credible, reliable, trustworthy and timely. Principally, through these outputs, GRAIN is acknowledged by many as an international leader and opinion maker.¹

Movement-building

GRAIN has long been active, together with others, in helping to support social movements in their efforts to stop the privatisation and loss of biodiversity in food and agriculture through networking, capacity sharing, and strategy development among organisations and activists. This work, while not always very visible, is something we regard as crucial. This is because peoples' struggles over biodiversity in our food systems are ultimately a struggle over power. As transnational corporations gain more and more control of food production, local peoples' rights, cultures and capacities to lead a better life are trampled and taken away from them. The struggle against this is long and difficult, requiring groups to work together across nations and sectors; it is necessarily collective, as is the struggle to develop meaningful alternatives. As an international organisation, GRAIN helps facilitate crucial sharing, learning, and collective agenda-setting across cultures and regions in the South. In this way, we contribute to the empowerment of those active on the ground.

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GRAIN is an organisation that represents no one except itself. However, through collaboration and partnerships we link in with local and national realities that play a meaningful role in our information, research, advocacy and networking activities. In fact, we work with many groups in different parts of the world, some of them millions-strong peoples' movements, contributing to capacity building, information sharing, institutional strengthening and strategy orientation.

Some of the partners and allies across the world that GRAIN has worked with in the past few years include:

- African Biodiversity Network (ABN)
- ANAMURI (women peasants' movement, Chile)
- bilaterals.org (global)
- Biodiversity in Action for Sustainable Agriculture - Asia (BASA-Asia)
- BIOTHAI (Thailand)
- COPAGEN (West Africa)
- Costa Rica's Biodiversity Network
- European peasant seed network
- International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (global)
- Kalpavriksh (India)
- Network for a GM-Free Latin America
- PEAC (China)
- South Asia Network for Food, Ecology and Culture
- Via Campesina (global and regional)

¹ "Evaluation of GRAIN's Information Work - Final Report" External evaluation commissioned by Swedbio (Sweden), Novib (the Netherlands) and The Fund for Sustainable Biodiversity Management, (the Netherlands), September 2007. A summary is available at our website: <http://www.grain.org/about/grain-eval-2007.pdf>