



THE RAM'S HORN

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The Cancer of Growth *by Brewster Kneen*

There is a cancer referred to as The Economy which is growing world-wide – in Canada, the USA, Brazil, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey, Mexico. It accompanies a notion – nay, ideological fantasy – that growth is a universal remedy for an ailing – or failing – economy. This is profoundly odd since the primary characteristic of cancer is that it endeavours to consume its host.

Only one item is apparently on Harper's capitalist agenda these days: set the economy to growing again, that is, reinvigorate the cancer. It is almost as if the economy were some giant field of corn and beans, a giant rice paddy, or the cod-fishery of old, able to provide for all if only we can get it growing again.

Never mind what was on our mind yesterday – climate chaos, peak oil, massive malnutrition and starvation, genetic engineering, growing inequity, loss of biodiversity, patenting life. Today there is only one priority, even though it is our mindless drive for economic growth that has caused and will continue to cause all these important moral and physical problems.

We've got to bail out the auto industry, even though it is at least half a century out of date, an infinitely destructive force in the world and a cause of climate change, energy depletion, and environmental destruction.

We've got to keep the food industry growing, even though it is its centralization, global sourcing and corporate concentration that is wiping out the peoples that feed themselves rather than us.

We've got to keep the tar sands expanding to fuel our economic growth, regardless of the environmental costs to the entire world.

Yes, by hook or crook, we have no choice. We have to get the economy going again, even if it kills us.

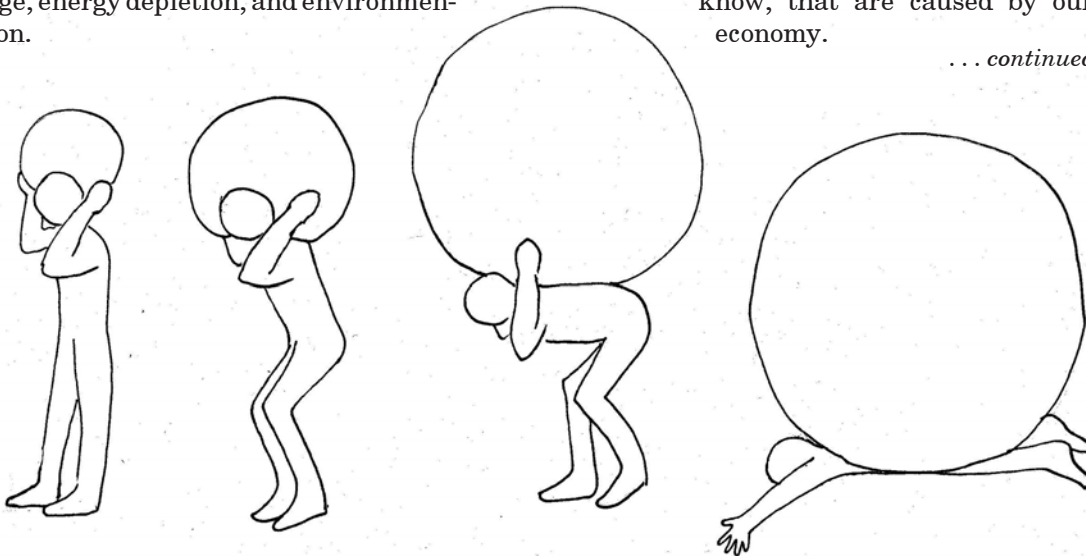
If we cut back our energy consumption, our GNP will falter and the economy won't grow.

If we insist on eating locally and ecologically, the agrotoxin, fertilizer and transport industries, not to mention the food manufacturing and pharmaceutical industries, will no longer grow and our economy will stumble and fall.

If we stop producing weapons, our exports will fall and our economy shrink.

No, we have to get the economy growing again! Only then will we be able to address the problems we know about, and even some of those we do not yet know, that are caused by our growing economy.

... continued next page



What is the point of ‘growing the economy’? In the business press we read that the point is generally to assure and increase corporate profits. No mention is made of what else could be done with or in The Economy, such as more inclusive health care, public transport, more communal facilities and long-term residential care for ‘seniors’, and good-food-for-all programs.

Instead, “to improve profitability” for the insurance ‘industry’ insurance premiums are to rise by 15–20%. “While rate hikes will be a burden on consumers, they will help improve the profitability of a sector [of the economy] that has been hurt by a string of climatic events.” Being “hurt” is not the same as losing money, it just means reduced profits. So the insurance ‘industry’ is also reducing coverage for “extreme weather” damages, thus increasing corporate profits while doing nothing to address climate change, or “exposure to unusual weather” such as recent ice storms in Eastern Canada. Odd, that’s what we thought was the whole point of buying insurance.

— source: GM, 8/1/14

“Growing the Economy” does not apply just to countries. Corporate executives, such as Canadian Pacific Railway CEO Hunter Harrison, are major beneficiaries (\$49.15 million in 2012). We find it disgusting to say, as the press does, that Harrison “earned” that much. Neither he nor any other human being can “earn” \$49.15 million in one year. However, that much can be stolen, appropriated or otherwise seized out of the national economy. In 2012 Canada’s top CEOs were paid 171 times more (an average of \$7.96 million) than the average national income.

Prairie grain farmers who rely on the railroads to get their grain to terminal for export may not be happy with CP’s service, but shareholders of CPR do not need to be so jealous of Mr Harrison: CP profit rose to \$875 million for 2013, or \$4.96 a share from \$2.79 a year earlier. Those who really got the short end of the stick from Mr Harrison are the 4,500 workers who lost their jobs as their contribution to Mr. Harrison’s \$49.15 million income.

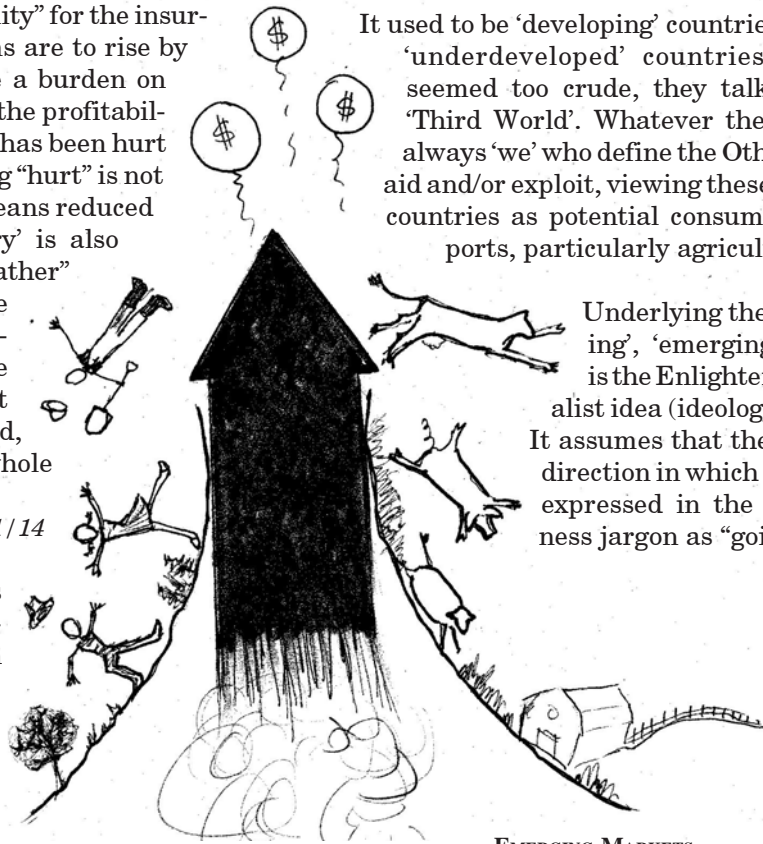
While the newspapers are firing staff and cutting their news as they become uglier and uglier vehicles for consumer advertising, the CEO of Thomson Reuters Corp took home \$18.81 million – enough to cover the salaries of quite a few unemployed reporters.

Emerging Markets

How would you like your country to be defined as an ‘emerging market’? This is how, according to the Globe & Mail Report on Business, ‘investors’ are regarding Mexico, China, India, Turkey, South Africa, and Brazil. Or ‘emerging market economies’, or ‘rising economies’.

It used to be ‘developing’ countries, before that, ‘underdeveloped’ countries. When that seemed too crude, they talked about the ‘Third World’. Whatever the moniker, it’s always ‘we’ who define the Others we wish to aid and/or exploit, viewing these ‘unfortunate’ countries as potential consumers of our exports, particularly agricultural exports.

Underlying the switch to ‘rising’, ‘emerging’ ‘developing’ is the Enlightenment, rationalist idea (ideology) of Progress. It assumes that there is only one direction in which to move: tidily expressed in the popular business jargon as “going forward”.



EMERGING MARKETS

Agri-Business Policy

No more agricultural policy for Canada. It is to be replaced by corporate profit policy for the agricultural ‘sector’.

Canada’s Ag Minister Gerry Ritz says he wants to change an agriculture mired in regulation and restriction into a system open to the world market, helping the Canadian sector become “more mature and more global.” To achieve this, Ritz has made passage of bill C-18 his top priority. The National Farmers’ Union rightly describes this as “A corporate agri-business promotion act.”

The centrepiece of C-18 is greatly increased patent rights for plant breeders in both scope and length, so that they can make more money from the plant varieties they offer. Essentially, it would take plant breeding out of the public realm of Ag Canada and put

it in the hands of private corporations – which is fine with Ritz since he sees corporate welfare as key to Canadian welfare. A spokesman for International Trade Minister Ed Fast repeated the magic “growth” mantra: “The Canadian government recognizes that rules to protect intellectual property are needed to foster an environment that promotes innovation, attracts new investment, and stimulates economic growth.”

According to Ritz, “There’s never been as much consultation with industry, like-minded people, forward thinking producers. . .” The like-minded people Ritz refers to and feels at home with are, of course, not the people we think of as farmers, but corporate executives.

The party line is reflected in an article attributed to Stephen Morgan Jones, a ‘director’ in Ag Canada, about the future of wheat. The article says that “the federal government has been creating the conditions to unlock wheat’s potential through marketing freedom [otherwise known as illegally destroying the Canadian Wheat Board], reforms in the Canadian Grain Commission and variety registration. As well, it recently introduced Bill C-18, which will bring plant breeders’ rights legislation in line with that of our competitors and foster increased innovation in the industry. . . . A revitalized wheat industry . . . will yield a rich harvest for Canada’s economy . . . and it will propel jobs and growth through new value-added investments.” (WP, 16/1/14) We trust that Mr Jones is deeply distressed by having to put his name on such meaningless partisan hype.

Bill C-18 NFU Backgrounder

The National Farmers Union has produced a detailed analysis of Bill C-18, the “Agricultural Growth Act” omnibus bill, pointing out just how, if passed, it will give multi-national agri-business much more money, power and control while increasing farmers’ costs and reducing farmers’ autonomy and Canadian sovereignty. Some of the key points are:

C-18 Increases Corporate Control of Seed and Increases Farmers Seed Costs:

* C-18 amends Canada’s Plant Breeders Rights (PBR) Act to align with UPOV ’91 (the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants), vastly increasing plant breeders’ control of seed. It gives plant breeders power to authorize all reproduction, conditioning (cleaning and treating), stocking (bagging and storing), importing and exporting of PBR protected varieties of seed or other propagating material.

* It also enables “end-point royalties” (EPR) on the

whole crop following harvest instead of on purchased seed alone. EPRs would be deducted from grain sales. Where PBR-protected forage varieties are grown, royalties could be charged each time hay is cut.

* C-18 provides millions of dollars in new revenues annually to global agribusiness corporations that hold PBRs in Canada, including Monsanto, Bayer, Dow, DuPont, Cargill, Glencore International, Syngenta, Bunge, Limagrain and BASF.

C-18 attacks farmers age-old practice of selecting and saving seed for replanting:

* It converts farmers’ right to save PBR-protected seed into a government-given privilege – but also gives government the power to quickly and easily take it away, by passing regulations (which do not require Parliamentary approval) to remove classes of farmers, plant varieties, and entire crop kinds from the “Farmers Privilege” and to restrict, prohibit or put conditions on the use of harvested material.

* It allows farmers to save and condition seed – but not to stock it. Thus, a seed company may be able to sue a farmer for storing harvested seed saved to plant the following spring or saved to plant in subsequent years, as many farmers do to safeguard against crop failure.

C-18 Undermines Public Plant Breeding:

* If farmers are compelled to buy seed every year, companies can simply offer a mass market product (which may also be linked to selling their other products) and will have no incentive to develop varieties for specific local and regional conditions, that are less input-dependent and can help farmers and our food system adapt to changing climate.

C-18 Reduces Canadian Control:

* It accelerates harmonization with trading partners to facilitate commerce for the benefit of powerful global corporations by giving them more control over our regulations, instead of safeguarding Canada’s food and agriculture system for the benefit of Canadians.

NFU Recommendations:

- > Stop Bill C-18
- > Adopt a new Seed Law based on the NFU’s Principles for a Farmers’ Seed Act
- > Re-establish and increase funding for public plant breeding institutions and public researchers and resume public plant breeding to the variety level.
- > Reorient Canada’s agricultural laws towards the principles of Food Sovereignty – healthy food, ecological sustainability and democratic control.

For more information visit: nfu.ca/issues/save-our-seed

“Economic diplomacy” in the service of private industry is now the centrepiece of Canada’s foreign policy. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade have been instructed to “entrench the concept of ‘economic diplomacy’ as the driving force behind its activities. All diplomatic assets of the Government of Canada will be marshalled on behalf of the private sector” to open new markets to Canadian goods and services, according to the Global Markets Action Plan.

– GM, 27/11/13

Canola Council of Canada – One Big Happy Growing Family

The introductory statement on their website (*canola council.org*) boldly describes The Canola Council of Canada as “the first industry association in Canada to encompass all links in the value chain,” as if the interests of all the links were the same. “Our members include canola growers, crop input suppliers, grain handling companies, exporters, processors, food and feed manufacturers and governments. All sit at the same table to develop a common platform for growth.” (There’s ‘growth’ again.) “Our goal is to increase market demand and production to 15 million tonnes by 2015.”

“Huge new goals set for Cinderella crop” shouts the headline.

– WP, 16/1/14



CLUB ROOT THREATENS SHORT CANOLA ROTATION

The Canola Council of Canada has just come out with a call for greatly increased canola production in Western Canada. The Council, supported by every corporation with a significant business interest in Canola, from seeds to shipping, is calling for more intensive canola production, meaning essentially significantly shorter crop rotations, ‘genetics’, i.e., more genetically engineered seed, and improved agronomic practices.

There is, however, no mention of the costs of the ‘inputs’ of fertilizers and agrottoxins that would be required to increase production, on the one hand, and the greatly increased disease problems such as club root and blackleg, sure to come with shorter rotations. Since the development of Canola, the rule has been a four-year rotation, that is, growing canola one year out of four. These longer term costs will not appear in the financial reports of the corporate backers of the Canola Council but be borne by the farmers growing the crop.

While the Council says “The yield increase is expected to be necessary to meet rising global demand for vegetable oil,” it would be more reasonable to suggest that the corporations simply want to grow their own businesses by means of canola. It would also make their program more realistic and less ideological if climate change were ever mentioned. A past chair of Saskcanola wondered, “I don’t know if we have overvalued the potential of genetics and agriculture research and undervalued the impact of weather.”

– source: WP, 23/1/14

The following week, Western Producer published two articles reporting Canola Council agronomists as saying that going for yield over proper crop rotations is a recipe for disaster.

Canola Growers

There is an organization of actual canola farmers, called the Canadian Canola Growers Association. It was formed in 1984 by producers from Western Canada to provide canola farmers with access to cash advances under the Advanced Payment Program operated by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. In addition, the CCGA has become a strong advocate for canola farmers on national and international issues and policies.

– ccga.ca

Beware the drug salesman

The new president of CropLife Canada, former farmer and Tory MP Ted Menzies, says he wants to bridge the public debate gap between organic and conventional

agriculture. CropLife, like similarly named organizations around the world, represents the interests of farm input suppliers (seeds, pesticides, agrottoxins and other farm 'inputs'). The lobby for the fertilizer sector is the Canadian Fertilizer Institute.

Menzies promotes himself as an environmentalist because as a former farmer of 6,000 acres of crops he switched to no-till agriculture and reduced his contribution to global warming by reducing fuel consumption for tillage. In other words, he became a serious customer for Monsanto's Roundup herbicide. In saying, "My choice was to farm in a sustainable manner that produces safe crops," Menzies is simply, and conveniently, not bridging but skipping over the gap between organic and 'conventional' agriculture. He also ignores the fact that, in the global framework, 'conventional' agriculture is essentially organic, small scale and subsistence (non-market).

– source: WP, 23/1/14

Investment in Agriculture

Exhibit A: "Grow your potential with Input Capital"

"Input Capital is an innovative new venture capital company focused on the ag sector. We are looking for ambitious, forward-thinking canola farmers to provide them with the cash and expertise they need to build the best, most profitable farms possible.

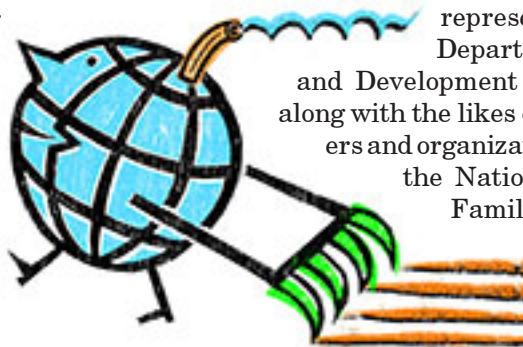
"Each of our relationships with our farmer partners is unique but the basics are the same. We provide our canola-growing partners with interest-free operating capital and access to the latest science through professional agrolgists in exchange for a canola streaming contract. It's a win-win formula that allows you to play "in the big leagues" of modern farming without getting buried under debt. . .

"The commodity streaming concept was developed to allow investors to provide mining companies with upfront money and a per-year payment in exchange for a portion of the mine's future production.

"Input Capital has adapted this successful model to agriculture. Input Capital makes upfront payments plus per-year payments to a farmer who needs capital. In return, the farmer agrees to provide a specified share of the crop for an extended time into the future."

– growyourpotential.ca;

see also: visualcapitalist.com



THE GRAPHIC USED ON THE RAI MATERIALS BETRAYS THE INDUSTRIAL MINDSET

Exhibit B: Responsible Agricultural Investment Principles by Cathleen Kneen

On January 13th I attended a meeting in Ottawa (with video-link to a meeting in Washington DC) on the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment (the RAI), an agreement proposed through the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) of the Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Aside from nostalgia – I loved Alphaghetti as a child – why was I there?

Back when I was Chair of Food Secure Canada, I went to Rome for a meeting of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) within the CFS. This was proposed by La Via Campesina to include peasants, people's movements etc., and, amazingly, established. It provides an opportunity to intervene in support of small-scale farmers, harvesters, farm workers, and traditional /Indigenous peoples and their responsibility to their lands and waters – even though such intervention may be ineffective in the long run. Anyway, I wound up as part of the North American contact group, invited to this meeting.

Is Responsible Agricultural Investment merely part of a larger effort to greenwash land grabbing and the destruction of small-scale, sustenance food systems in favour of industrial systems that return a profit to international investors?

My own feeling is that the only reason for getting involved in the process is to ensure that the protocol is designed to curb investment which is not responsible, and to encourage investments which, in the language of the document, "contribute to food security and nutrition and support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security". In fact, investment should be described as "responsible" if and only if it does so!

To my delight, there were some areas of agreement, even though (as usual) the meetings in Ottawa and Washington were "balanced" – with representatives from both the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development and the US State Department, along with the likes of CropLife and the Canola Growers and organizations such as Food Secure Canada, the National Farmers Union and the US Family Farm Coalition. We agreed that there should be to be more emphasis on the role and needs of women, Indigenous peoples, harvesters, and farm workers



(including migrants); and we agreed that seeds and water along with land should be included as core elements of food security. We also agreed to include the requirement for Free, Prior and Informed Consent from the peoples affected (that's UN language).

The civil society folks there strongly suggested that since the protocol is voluntary and non-binding, there should be provisions for stringent monitoring and effective sanctions for anyone who has signed on to it. The logo for the RAI indicates the mind-set for productivism, and we emphasized the priority for agroecology instead. We pointed out that the protocol must apply to countries like our own as well as "developing" countries. And we emphasized the need to respect traditional peoples and their relationship to their territories, including in Canada.

However, in the final discussion, the representative of the US State Department told us that the US Government would prefer "Free, Prior and Informed Consultation", and this was duly included in the Chair's report of the consultation, even though it was definitely not the "will of the meeting". (The State Department rep also suggested, speaking for the US Government, that the Principles be reframed as mere "Goals".)

Will the positions of civil society have any real effect on the outcome? Time will tell. There is still an opening for people to express their concerns until February 20, 2014, at <http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/forum/discussions/RAI>

For a better understanding of the current issues around land grabbing, go to farmlandgrab.org and learn what's happening around the world. This is a project of Barcelona-based GRAIN and its globally scattered staff., including Devlin Kuyek in Montreal.

Aside from actual land grabs, what is done in and on the land, and by whom and for whom, are other crucial often-unasked questions.

A sample entry, attributed to Arab News, 24/4/14:

"Four local firms acquire Sudan agricultural lands: "Saudi companies are making major forays into agriculture in Sudan as is evident from the recent acquisition of agricultural lands covering an area of approximately 4,000 acres in Sudan's northern region." –farmlandgrab.org weekly | 29 Jan 2014

Local Technology

We were very happy to receive the 2014 desk calendar from *icipe* – African Insect Science for Food and Health (www.icipe.org). *icipe* is a research organization, which works in human, animal, plant and environmental health. Hans Herren, more recently noted as an ambassador for the extraordinary report of the IAASTD, was for a number of years the Director of *icipe*.

A note on the calendar says "*icipe* will continue to develop, introduce and adapt new tools and strategies for arthropod management that are environmentally safe, affordable, appropriate, socially acceptable and applicable by the target end-users, with full community participation."

It also featured the following story, by Mrs Agnes Maureen Ambubi (*photo below*):



I became a farmer about 20 years ago. Previously I lived in Nairobi with my husband and our three children. He was the sole bread winner while I was a housewife. In 1998 my husband died. Fortunately, he had just bought a two-acre piece of land in Vihiga, western Kenya. I relocated our young family there and tried to support them through subsistence farming. But the piece of land was infertile and, in particular, the cereal crops were prone to constant and devastating attacks by stemborers and the parasitic striga weed.

In 2002, some of my neighbours attended a push-pull training course at *icipe* and they started practising the technology on their farms. I was impressed by the improvement on their land, and I asked them to teach me how to use the technology. I started my first push-pull plot that same year. My maize yield went up, from 10-35 kilos. I have since increased the use of push-pull on my farm and today I harvest 360 kilos per year. I have also ventured into dairy farming and poultry keeping, using the fodder from the push-pull intercrops, which are desmodium and Napier grass. I have three improved breed cows, 80 graded and 50 free range chickens.

I started practising push-pull at the lowest point of my life and the technology lifted me up. I had no idea how I would support my family. Now I have been able to educate my children up to university and college level. I have even adopted an orphaned child. Moreover, I now teach other farmers how to use the technology.

The Push-Pull System

(from RH 182, July 2000)

“The stemborer is attracted to napier-grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*) at the outside of the field and repelled by desmodium (*Desmodium uncinatum*) from the inside of the field. This “push-pull” system was originally developed by *icipe*, starting with the knowledge that the stemborer must have been indigenous to East Africa long before maize was introduced there (about 100 years ago). Originally, its host must have been different kinds of wild grass and only later on did it specialize in maize, which had no resistance against it and was more nutritious. For 4 years, Khan and his team selected several species of wild grass with strong stemborer-attracting odours and cultivated them in a garden near the local station. Farmers from the surroundings were invited to choose from the different varieties: they mostly preferred Napier- and Sudan-grass, which both look very similar to maize and are good fodder. Varieties of wild grass looking more like “weed” were passed over.

“The selection of “repellent-plants” was successful, too: molasses-grass (*Melinis minutiflora*) reduced the loss of crop from 40% to 4-6%. . . The silver-leaved desmodium is a good stemborer-repellent, with the added advantage of being a soil-enriching, nitrogen-fixing legume that keeps the soil moist and protects it from erosion. But best of all, desmodium is most effective against Striga, to everybody’s surprise. With desmodium, striga is suppressed by a factor of 40 compared to maize monocrop. Although striga is a very beautiful weed with its pink blossoms, it is a deadly plant, being a parasite on maize roots, to say nothing of the fact that a single plant produces 20,000 tiny seeds that disperse easily. In all Africa, problems caused by Striga are increasing.”

Monsanto: Just A Helping Hand

Soya farmers in Mato Grosso, Brazil, are facing new problems with their current summer crop. First it was an outbreak of *Helicoverpa* earworm, and now it is an invasion of corn into soybean plantations in the state. The so-called guaxo corn — guaxo is a term used for plants that germinate without being cultivated — is considered a weed and has directly affected production costs.

The problem is that most of this corn, which grows spontaneously, is of the Roundup Ready type, so that when the farmer applies glyphosate in the crop, it kills weeds, but it does not eliminate the soybean or guaxo corn.

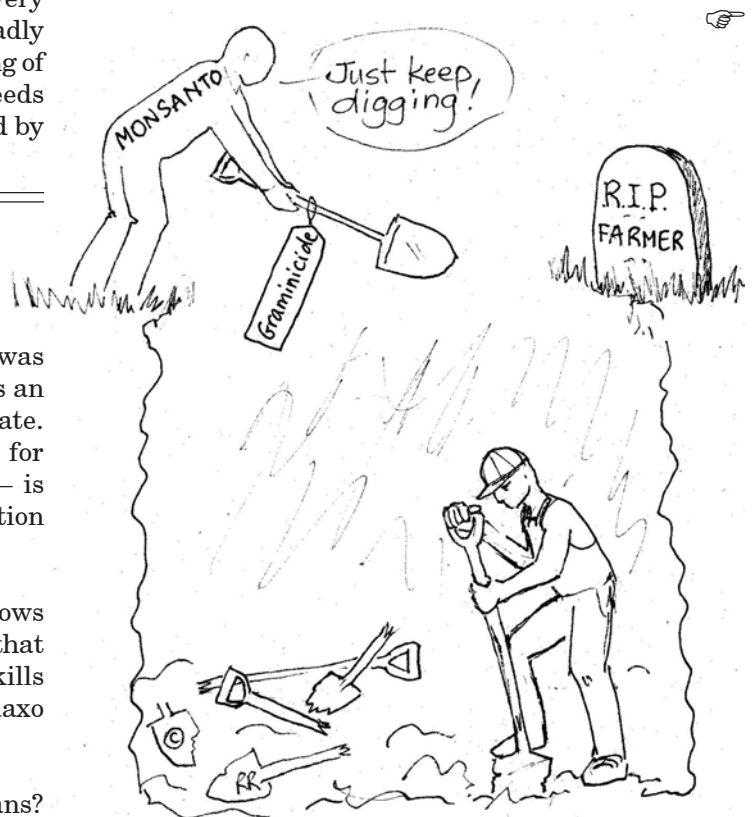
And how has corn ended up mixing with soybeans?

The most probable hypothesis is linked to the winter corn crop: During this second corn crop, grains that are dropped during harvesting, between May and September, remain in the soil and eventually germinate with soybeans, favored by rains in the beginning of the summer crop. The use of old harvesters can also contribute to the appearance of guaxo corn. A new harvester must provide less than 0.5% of mechanical loss, while a machine with 12 years of use increases that loss up to 8%.

Removal of guaxo corn is needed because the plant competes with soybean for water, light and nutrients. Initial data from a survey by Embrapa Soja indicate that two to four corn plants by square metre of soybean plantation may reduce soybean productivity. by up to 50%.

There is even a commercial barrier: If grains stay until the harvest, corn will mix with soybeans in the bags, leading trading companies to apply discounts on the amounts paid to farmers. To weed out the invader, the most effective solution is to invest in the application of a graminicide, a type of pesticide able to eliminate narrow-leaf plants, such as corn, genetically modified or conventional.

“The control is not difficult, but it is costly. I had to apply graminicide three times, with very high dosages,” says one farmer. Dissatisfaction with the technology has led the farmer to give up the cultivation of RR corn.



“There is a higher expense for farming, but since I will not have to pay royalties for the use of RR, I think that will be offset,” he says. The non-genetically modified corn can also sprout spontaneously amid RR soybean plantations, but it is eliminated with the application of glyphosate, along with other weeds.

The case of a farmer in the Campo Verde municipality is even more curious. He does not cultivate glyphosate-resistant corn, but found several of them in his soybean plots this season. The weed came from nearby farms, and he estimated that at least 40% of his 300 hectares of soybeans have been contaminated. The invasion was so intense that it was necessary to weed them out manually, with hoes.

Leonardo Bastos, Monsanto chief of marketing, says that cases like Mr. Schenkel’s are localized and the use of graminicide against guaxo corn resistant to glyphosate is “proper in the system.” The graminicide, Mr. Bastos adds, also expands the range of herbicides used in cultivations and minimizes the chances of weeds resistant to some chemical element to emerge. “We understand that despite the cost with the graminicide, the revenue generated by the higher productivity of RR corn compensates the farmer,” he says.

– *International Valor, Sao Paulo 9/1/14*

Letter From a Friend:

I spent most of December in Europe, including Spain – what a beautiful country and what really wonderful people! But the Spaniards have their problems, just like the rest of the world. One of the shocking and heartbreaking sights was along the southern coast, between Almeria and Malaga. I’m not talking about the apartments and condominiums crowding the coastline, I’m talking about the greenhouse industry that surrounds these condos.

In order for Northern Europeans to eat out-of-season veggies, southern Spain has been turned into a plastic greenhouse. This is one of the most appalling environmental disasters I have ever seen – or imagined. The soil comes from The Netherlands and is encased in long, plastic greenhouses that stretch as far as the eye can see – some estimates put it at 100,000 acres. The veggies that grow in these hot houses are doused with herbicides and pesticides, and after seven years the depleted soil, and much of the plastic, is dumped into the Mediterranean Sea. The workforce is underpaid, super-exploited and toiling in 45-47C temperatures to harvest the plants. (www.amusingplanet.com/2013/08/the-greenhouses-of-almeria.html) This broke my heart – and reminded me of BC’s fish farms, growing salmon in putrid pens in order to cultivate an out of season market. And it reminded me of how hard we have to fight to stop this from happening, not just here but around our beautiful globe.



Published by **Brewster and Cathleen Kneen**
 phone/fax: (613) 828-6047
 email: brewster@ramshorn.ca
www.ramshorn.ca

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