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Dr. Antonio Brack, Minister of the Environment, reaffirms prohibition of genetic engineering

Peru backs bio-diversity and organic agriculture

Graefelfing/Lima – At a meeting with Naturland in Lima on 18th March, 2010, the Peruvian minister of the environment, Dr. Antonio Brack, emphasised organic agriculture as being an extremely important item of Peru’s environmental policy. “The bio-diversity found in Peru is unique the world over. This diversity is exploited in a sustainable manner by organic agricultural practices, and protected by them. The 19,000 certified Naturland smallholders are excellent publicity for Peru”, says Brack, Peru’s minister of the environment.

Naturland’s general manager, Steffen Reese, particularly welcomed Peru’s prohibition of genetic engineering in agriculture: “With its veto of genetic engineering in agriculture, Peru has set Europe an example.”

Genetic engineering in agriculture threatens bio-diversity

At present, 2,321 varieties of potato and 55 of maize flourish in Peru. This diversity is a way of adapting to the effect of diverse geographic and climatic conditions on the agricultural ecology. “Peru’s wealth lies in its enormous bio-diversity. Genetic engineering in agriculture is a threat to this immense gene pool,” says Brack. The approval given for the release of genetically modified maize, such as MON810, and the licence granted to Amflora potatoes in Europe have consequences on the political discussion and decisions in other countries, such as Peru. As Naturland’s general manager, Reese, says, “We bear great responsibility for our society. The political decision-makers in Berlin and Brussels, however, do not yet appear to be aware of this fact”.

Cultivating organic coffee is a form of environmental protection

Coffee certified by Naturland grows under shade trees, in what are known as agro-forestry systems. This sustainable system of cultivation protects the soil, the climate and water, and is characterised by a great variety of species. “The more organic coffee is drunk in Europe, the better it is for the people and environment of Peru”, says Brack. Brack, who heads a ministry which has only existed for the past 22 months, has put the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the Amazon’s rain forests at the top of his list of priorities. A new forestry law has been passed with strict measures to protect Peru’s 55 million hectares of primary forest (the Federal Republic of Germany, in comparison, has 37 million hectares). The plan is to place a complete ban on the clearing of primary forest, which is currently being wiped out at a rate of 150,000 hectares a year, by 2021.

Most organic coffee from Peru is Naturland coffee

In 2009, 16,700 tons of coffee certified by Naturland, to a value of over US\$ 55 million, were exported from Peru. Peru is the greatest exporter of organic coffee in the world, with 34,500 tons of organic coffee being exported in 2009. With its 19,000 smallholders which work to the Naturland standards, Peru is a crucial member of Naturland’s international network. Besides growing coffee, Peru also cultivates cocoa, bananas, mangos and other tropical fruit to the Naturland standards. *Naturland promotes organic agriculture throughout the world. With its 55,000 farmers and over 500 manufacturers as Naturland partners, it is one of the major organic farming associations. Naturland regards organic competence and social responsibility as interdependent.*

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