



Memo n°13: OUSMANE TIENDREBEOGO

Farmer, Burkina Faso

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**TESTIMONY OF FARMER OUSMANE TIENDREBEOGO (OF
SYNTAP and COPAGEN)**

BT cotton was introduced in Burkina Faso discreetly at first, and was revealed in 2003. Since then the government has used campaigns to promote its use make us believe that cotton was a panacea, a universal remedy for solving problems with pollution due to pesticides, small crop yield, and poverty.

At the same time GMO resistance coalition forces emerged: the GMO monitoring coalition deal and the Coalition for the Protection of Genetic Patrimony COPAGEN (COPAGEN) of whom SYNTAP is a member. These two associations are led by leading researchers, who promoted the principle of precaution, and gave us training and information on GMOs, their issues and most importantly their potential risks.

In 2008 the government decided to manufacture a large field of BT transgenic cotton.

Sowing and harvesting activities reserved mostly for women caused much inconvenience, especially to pregnant women and nursing mothers as they were forbidden to participate in these jobs.

The first warning was given by Mr. Emmanuel Tétébafo, a producer from the village of Kongolikan who had kept and farmed sheep and goats for over twenty years. As was usual for his livestock, his animals grazed on the cotton he cultivated. But in this first BT cotton countryside, animals started to experience a disease, a disease which veterinarians could neither determine nor describe.

The farmer was unable to find an explanation to this problem from any other source; for over twenty years he had kept his animals alongside his conventional cotton field which he had treated six times, and they had never had a similar health problem. BT cotton representatives came from Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou, accompanied by the regional Police. They brought with them a goat they tied in the cotton field for the duration of their presence at the scene, after which they took her back with the gendarmes telling Mr. Tétébafo that the producer will now check to see if the goat dies. In addition, they took a few leaves of BT cotton saying that analyzes would be made in the Monsanto laboratory, to see if the death of the animals is linked to BT cotton, telling Mr. Tétébafo that he would receive compensation if the link is confirmed. However if the results came back negative, he would have to pay two million five hundred thousand francs (2,500,000) CFA francs for each of the five tests

they would have to do. A few days later the representatives returned to tell him that the death of his animals is in no way related to BT cotton. They then added that they had to ask Monsanto forgiveness and were grateful for the company having covered the expenses he would not have been able to pay for being a poor farmer. This forever silenced any further accusation in their direction.

The big disappointment for all GMO producers came at the time of harvest. The yield that would have produced between 12 to 15 tons, only produced between 5.50 t and 8 t. Factory officials knew this because they had taken the precaution to decide that producers could not accompany their harvest to the factory for weighing. The 2009 campaigns brought to light yet another contradiction in the allegations of the promoters of GMOs: they were told that BT cotton requires only two treatments against piercing-sucking type insects that the BT toxin cannot defeat.

The intermediate treatment products had not been supplied and an attack unfortunately occurred in this period and the fields were greatly damaged.

BT Cotton has had a negative impact for farmers:

- Many are small producers who have given up because of unsuccessful yield.
- Research was manipulated, discouraging researchers to look into the disturbing animal mortality rate that occurred in this period and whose symptoms do not correspond to those diseases already known.
- Many farmers lost their livestock, forcing them to retreat to neighbouring countries.