



Colloquium Series: Biopiracy, Biodiversity Conservation and Food Security in India

Speaker:

Leo F. Saldanha & Bhargavi S. Rao, Environment Support Group, Bangalore

Date / Time:

February 9, 2012 - 3:15pm

Venue:

Room 307, Third Floor, Pixel B, APU

Abstract:

Wise use and conservation of biodiversity and their protection as the commons is fundamental to ensuring food security of millions. Legal regimes have evolved over time in acknowledging this reality and developing regulatory systems to support this praxis. In recent times, however, the increasing influence of profit motivated and corporatised control of agriculture has gnawed at this sacred relationship of humanity with our living planet. Current policies are aggressively promoting commodification of nature. Seed sovereignty, which is fundamental to sustaining India's farming systems, is seriously under threat. Another major worry is the increasing evidence of corporates and public institutions colluding to develop patented agricultural products, invariably in patent violation of local community rights and biodiversity protection laws. What does all this entail for the future of our nation, especially in securing food for all?

The speakers will discuss these issues in the context of their ongoing battle against biopiracy by Monsanto and others in advancing the highly controversial B.t. Brinjal product. One of their papers on the issue is attached with this email. More information is accessible on this issue at: www.esgindia.org

A Note on the Speaker:

Leo F. Saldanha is full-time Coordinator of ESG. He has gained wide-ranging experience in the areas of Environmental Law and Policy, Decentralisation, Urban Planning and a variety of Human Rights and Development related issues, working across many sectors for over a decade. He is a keen campaigner on critical environmental and social justice issues and has guided several campaigns demanding evolution of progressive laws and effective action. He has creatively supported various distressed communities to secure justice through public interest litigations and advocacy efforts. He has argued as party in person several public interest

litigations, many of which have resulted in remarkable judgments. In 2007, he co-authored the book “Green Tapism” critiquing the Environment Impact Notification 2006 along with team members at ESG. His articles have appeared in many leading newspapers, journals and magazines. He facilitates a variety of learning programmes on environmental and social justice concerns for a wide range of audiences. He was the Country Coordinator and Faculty of the "Cities in the 21st Century" and "Health and Community" courses of the International Honours Programme, USA from 2002-2009. He has a background in Environmental Science from St. Joseph's College, Bangalore University and has been invited as a speaker by organisations and universities across the world. In August 2010, he was invited as a speaker at the International Forum on China's Rural Reform in the 12th Five-Year Plan Period organised by the [Chinese Institute for Reform and Development](#), a Chinese Government think-tank for reform in policy decision-making. In recognition of his contribution to environmental and social justice efforts, Association for India's Development, USA, has made him a [Saathi](#).

Bhargavi S. Rao is a Trustee and Coordinator of Educational and Training Programmes at ESG. She also facilitates research, coordination and mobilization on Campaign initiatives. Passionate about environment and social justice she comes with a diverse background in research, teaching and activism. Her efforts are focused to educate the public, affected communities and students on a variety of critical legal, environmental and social justice issues through a range of educational and training workshops. She worked as Co-Country Coordinator and Faculty of the "Cities in the 21st Century" and "Health and Community" courses of the International Honours Programme, USA from 2002 -2009 and teaches on other International study abroad programs coordinated by ESG. She has worked in the Dept. of Microbiology and Cell Biology of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, worked as a lecturer in the BMS Women's College and as high-school teacher in Aurobindo School. She has a M. Phil. in Botany from Bangalore University. In recognition of her contribution to environmental and social justice efforts, Association for India's Development, USA, has made her a [Saathi](#).