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Fair Trade for a Better World

June 16, 2014

Via Email

Alex Morgan
Tensie Whelan
233 Broadway, 28th Floor
New York, NY 10279

Dear Alex and Tensie:

In light of recent developments of synthetic biology technology, I am writing you as a leading eco-social certifier to take swift action in defense of small producers. Synthetic biology (synbio) is a technology that has also been called genetic engineering on steroids and allows chemical companies to create ingredients in vats via synthetic DNA inserted into microbes that are fed sugar or corn syrup.

Because the stated intention of leading synbio manufacturers is to label and market synbio ingredients as "natural," they will undercut and compete unfairly with high value crops that provide sustainable livelihoods for farmers and workers. Vanilla and saffron are just two examples of crops that will soon be labeled as natural even though they are produced in labs.

This is a more extreme form of genetic engineering and although genetically engineered ingredients themselves have traditionally not qualified for eco-social certification, certification has been weak on allowing non-certified GMO ingredients to exist alongside non-GMO crops and ingredients on farms and in products. Most GE crops are engineered for heavy herbicide use, which increases exposure for farmworkers and contaminates groundwater.

You are in a position to protect smallholder farmers while letting consumers know that synbio is not a natural option as industry advocates claim and GMO crops do not contribute to sustainable livelihoods for small-scale farmers.

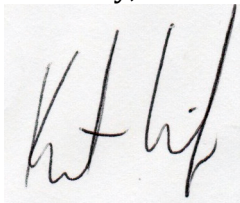
Therefore, we ask you to first confirm that you will not certify any synbio ingredients as "ecosocial" in themselves. This would be consistent with not certifying GMO crops as well. Please let us know where in your policies or standards this is made clear.

Second, we ask you to respond to the recommendation that you immediately include any ingredient available in synbio form be considered high risk and licensees required to

submit a sustainability plan for where they will purchase these ingredients to ensure they come from farms and not synbio vats. As a longer term plan, incorporate a policy that any ingredients commercially available in an eco-social form be purchased over any synbio or GMO ingredients, which should be excluded or at a minimum labeled.

We believe these measures will help protect farmers against unfair competition and protect the integrity of fair trade and eco-social labeling as we have found that most consumers expect products carrying a seal to contain sustainable ingredients produced in fair trade or eco-social form by actual farmers and farmworkers. We hope you agree and would appreciate a response by July 15th.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kerstin Lindgren", written on a light-colored background.

Kerstin Lindgren
Campaign Director