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Monsanto Statement April 1999

Open Letter From Monsanto CEO Robert B. Shapiro To Rockefeller Foundation President Gordon Conway

In an open letter from Monsanto CEO Robert B. Shapiro to Rockefeller Foundation President Gordon Conway, Monsanto announced it will not pursue technologies that render seed sterile.

October 4, 1999

Dr. Gordon Conway
President
Rockefeller Foundation
420 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10018-2702

Dear Gordon:

I am writing to let you know that we are making a public commitment not to commercialize sterile seed technologies, such as the one dubbed "Terminator." We are doing this based on input from you and a wide range of other experts and stakeholders, including our very important grower constituency.

As you know, sterile seed technology is one of a class of so-called "gene protection systems." This is a group of technologies, all still in the conceptual or developmental stage, that could potentially be used to protect the investment companies make in developing genetically-improved crops, as well as possibly providing other agronomic benefits. Some would work by rendering seeds from such crops sterile, while others would work by other means, such as deactivating only the value-added biotech trait. One of the sterile seed technologies was developed and patented jointly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Delta & Pine Land, with which we announced our intent to merge in the spring of 1998.

Last April, after hearing concerns about the potential impact of gene protection systems in developing countries and consulting with a number of international experts and development leaders, we called for a thorough, independent review of gene protection systems. We also pledged not to commercialize any of them until that review was completed and we had responded to the issues raised.

Since then, however, we have continued to listen to people who have a particular interest in sterile seed technologies, including the concerns you expressed to our Board in June. Though we do not yet own any sterile seed technology, we think it is important to respond to those concerns at this time by making clear our commitment not to commercialize gene protection systems that render seed sterile.

It is also important to understand that the technical and business

utility of sterile seed technology is speculative. The specific technology over which Monsanto would gain ownership through its pending merger with Delta & Pine Land is developmental, at least five years away from any possible commercialization, and may or may not prove workable in a commercial setting.

The need for companies to protect and gain a return on their investments in agricultural innovation is real. Without this return, we would no longer be able to continue developing new products growers have said they want. Monsanto holds patents on technological approaches to gene protection that do not render seeds sterile and has studied one that would inactivate only the specific gene(s) responsible for the value-added biotech trait. We are not currently investing resources to develop these technologies, but we do not rule out their future development and use for gene protection or their possible agronomic benefits.

For this reason, we continue to support the open, independent airing of all of the issues raised by the use of gene protection systems to protect the investment companies make in agricultural innovation. We understand, for example, that the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences is planning an international study of these issues. We renew the pledge we made in April that we will not make any decision to commercialize a gene protection technology until a full airing of the issues is complete and we have responded publicly to the concerns that are raised.

We are fully committed to modern biotechnology as a safe, sustainable tool for farmers and an important contributor to the future success of agriculture in meeting the world's needs for food and fiber. The technology has already brought important benefits to growers and the environment after just a few years of commercial application. We are working hard to build on this success.

We also recognize that biotechnology, like any new technology, raises issues that must be addressed. We appreciate your involvement with these important issues and the perspective and expertise you contributed at our June Board meeting. We find significant value in engaging stakeholders and the expert community in active dialogue on issues surrounding biotechnology and the future success of agriculture. I look forward to continuing our dialogue with you on the many issues and challenges that lie ahead.

Sincerely,

Robert B. Shapiro
Chairman and CEO
Monsanto Company

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