



Press release, Manresa, 10 March 2015

THE GANXET PDO CAUSES GENETIC EROSION AND RESTRICTS FARMERS' RIGHTS

*Federation of the Catalan Network of Graners
and
"Resowing and Sharing" Seeds Network*

In 2006, a Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO) "Mongeta del ganxet" or "Ganxet bean" was created, to be limited to the region of Vallés and a few municipalities of Maresme and La Selva, in Catalunya.

The Ganxet bean is a local variety that has been produced and selected by farmers since more than 150 years [1]. The seed is characterised by its kidney shape, like the hook of a crochet needle ("ganxo"), and the bean is favoured in Catalunya for its flavour and almost imperceptible skin.

The Ganxet bean was registered by the Agricultural Cooperative of Sabadell [with the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture] as a public domain variety in 1998. As such, it is available for collective use, subject to no restrictions.

The Agricultural High School of Barcelona bred and maintains the "Montcau" bean variety [2], registered in 2008 in the official registry of commercial varieties and protected [under Plant Variety Protection (PVP) law] until 2031 [3].

It is well known that companies and research institutes take local varieties, give them a facelift and then register them as protected commercial varieties [under PVP law]. This is what's called biopiracy. The rightsholder to the Montcau variety is the Miguel Agustí Foundation, which was already denounced by civil society organisations in 2012 for the alleged misappropriation of local varieties [4]. This foundation never responded to the public outcry. Are we now facing a new case of biopiracy, in which the public administration is complicit?

During the first year of the PDO, seeds of the Montcau variety were supplied to farmers as a means of complying with the technical requirements for the Ganxet PDO. The paradox is that we had people wanting to produce Ganxet beans using a protected variety which, even though it was a Ganxet type of bean, did NOT carry the name Ganxet.

This means that the creation of the Ganxet PDO has been the cause of serious genetic erosion in Catalunya, and of the unfair and abusive restriction of farmers' rights to use local Ganxet seeds. As an example of this, several companies that produce and bottle Ganxet beans have been threatened with legal action because they happen to be outside the PDO area.

Many organisations are aware of the damage that creating and applying this PDO to cultivated diversity could have on farmers rights as recognised by the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture at the FAO [5]. Even the

European Union has drawn up a European Regulation 1151/2012 [6] on quality rules for food and agricultural products which regulates PDOs, among other things, and which states: “A name may not be registered as a designation of origin or geographical indication where it conflicts with a name of a plant variety or an animal breed and is likely to mislead the consumer as to the true origin of the product.” In fact, the Ganxet PDO is the first and only one in Catalunya which has taken the name of a local variety.

Given all the above, we want to state very clearly that:

- According to the current Seed Law, any person or legal entity may freely commercialise the Ganxet variety, whether they fall under the Ganxet PDO or not.
- Any farmer may save seed year after year of the Ganxet variety and of any other variety in the public domain.
- Any registered seed producer may sell seeds of this variety.

The Federation of the Catalan Network of Graners and the state coordination “Resowing and Sharing” Seeds Network demand that, out of respect for farming communities, the Ganxet PDO must retroactively abide by European law and either change its name or be withdrawn.

For more information:

Federation of the Catalan Network of Graners
Xènia Torras and Ester Casas
Tel. +34669608209 or +34650257814
Email: xenia@associaciolera.org or lesrefardes@gmail.com

“Resowing and Sharing” Seeds Network
María Carrascosa
Tel: +34650102339
Email: correo@redsemillas.info

[1] Navarro Soler, D. (1880). Cultivo perfeccionado de las hortalizas con todos los adelantos modernos... Madrid: Establecimiento Tipográfico de Pedro Núñez.

[2] Community Plant Variety Registry. Registry number 16426, Montcau bean:
https://cpvoextranet.cpvo.europa.eu/WD180AWP/wd180awp.exe/CTX_5076-11-OxSCEXgjlz-AEB6F843/frmTable_File/SYNC_-19801217

[3] This means that only companies that pay royalties to the owner of the variety can sell the seeds.

[4] Seeds Network. Press release 04/10/2012. Appropriation of traditional Catalan varieties or mismanagement by the government?: <http://www.redsemillas.info/?p=1746>

[5] FAO (2004). International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture:
<http://www.planttreaty.org/content/texts-treaty-official-versions>

[6] Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs .
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012R1151>