

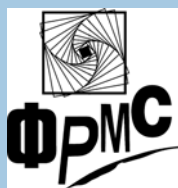
Dear friends,

Congratulations with Baba Marta's Day, may you be red and white, pink-cheeked and smiling!

FOR THE NATURE COALITION  
INFORMATION NEWSLETTER  
FEBRUARY 2010



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As this is the month marking the beginning of springtime we would like to tell you in brief about our idea and plans for the proper marking of **2010 – the Year of Biodiversity**. As you know, hopefully, in the month of April the celebration of Earth Day takes place on the 22 April. Traditionally, we from the Coalition (meaning the different organizations and citizen groups) already for several years have marked the very day by a lot of cultural events (concerts, exhibitions,

awareness activities) and celebrations, but since last year we have begun a new initiative named "Month of the Earth". Our idea and desire is not simply to celebrate on one day but to dedicate a whole month to activities that are useful and beneficial to the Earth which all we dwell in. In addition to the cultural and awareness activities in April we carry out, coordinate and participate in cleaning and tree planting campaigns. We have created also a blog (<http://mesecnazemiata.blogspot.com/>) for citizens' cleaning initiatives in which everybody having the cleaning will and enthusiasm I able to announce what and where is planned – from cleaning of inter-block-of-apartments areas to cleaning nature parks.

We are hopeful that this initiative will be continued and expanded this year as well! We await your plans and ideas. Otherwise, as we said, this year we are planning a lot of activities in April: "Green Days" in Sofia and various events throughout the country. Our call reads: let us create together Green Calendar wherein to mark every day, town and populated area that is planning any activities and point out what these are, in order to make the world around us more beautiful and clean. Write to us in case you have an idea for the month of April or the spring season.

At the end of the bulletin you can get acquainted with the forthcoming activities in March. Now, here is a little bit of what happened in the environment protection sphere during the shortest month of the year – February.

## THE GMO SAGA IN FEBRUARY

Citizen groups and a great deal of organizations and associations carried out more than 10 actions, protests and concerts against the attempts at liberalizing the Law on genetically modified organisms breeding and distribution. Further below we have shown with pictures and videos in a chronological order some of these, as well as the immediate effects of the civic actions. To us this campaign is the next evidence in a row that when people are interested, informed and proactive they can exert influence on the governance of the country and create a better world of higher quality in which we all can live.

On 31 January 2010 a citizen march was carried out under the slogan: "FOR PURE FOOD, FOR HEALTHY EARTH! BULGARIA – FREE OF GMO!"

In Sofia: <http://forthenature.org/gallery/240>, <http://forthenature.org/news/1316> and Plovdiv: <http://forthenature.org/gallery/241>.

Mothers organized the campaign "Green Bulgaria Cards" and SMS campaign against GMO: <http://forthenature.org/news/1368>, <http://forthenature.org/news/1326>.

The public discontent brought about a cunning PR move on the part of the incumbents: "GERB impose a moratorium in order to adopt the Law on GMO": <http://forthenature.org/media/1179>.

But what people really struggled for was a quality law and "Bulgaria – free of GMO" and therefore citizen activities, protests and juridical proposals were conducted in full force.

A flash-bomb against GMO took place on 9 February 2010, video clip at <http://forthenature.org/video/129>. The 11 February 2010 was the day on which protests were initiated all over the country by the "Bulgaria – free of GMO" Alliance. Russe, Varna, Plovdiv, Veliko Turnovo and Sofia arose in a nationwide protest against GMO in Bulgaria: <http://forthenature.org/gallery/244> (in Sofia),

<http://forthenature.org/gallery/245> (in Plovdiv), <http://forthenature.org/media/1193> (in Veliko Tarnovo).

On 11 February 2010 the parliamentary Environment and Water Commission approved the submitted by GERB proposal for a five-year moratorium on the Law on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) prior to the approval of the very texts of the draft.

On 12 February 2010 in Varna Deputy Minister Maneva and Minister Naidenov were thrown lettuces at. About 100 protestors gathered in front of the building of the District Administration in Varna to express their discontent with the amendments in the Law on Genetically Modified Organisms (LGMO) approved at first reading: <http://forthenature.org/media/1195>.

But on 16 February 2010 GERB took out of the draft the penalties for misuse of GMO: <http://forthenature.org/media/1203>.



On 18 February 2010 at its third extraordinary sitting the Environment and Water Commission voted for the preservation of the text of Article 80 and the distance of at least 30 km between the GMO fields and the areas protected under Natura 2000. This proposal was made by the Chairwoman of the National Assembly, Ms. Tsetska Tsacheva, through the Chairman of the Commission. It happened after a violent reaction of dissatisfaction on the part of the non-government organizations attending the Commission's sitting which was voiced by Ms. Theodora Piralkova, member of the initiative committee of citizens and parents.

On 28 February 2010 in front of St. Alexander Nevski Cathedral a grand meeting and concert took place under the slogan: "For Bulgaria free of GMO!" Pictures and video at: <http://forthenature.org/gallery/249> and <http://forthenature.org/video/136>.

The last hour's news is that the European Commission, absolutely scandalously and untransparently, approved in very short time terms another species of genetically modified cotton and three species of maize for planting and release on the market in the territory of the European Union. Since in the near future some further discussions are expected as regards the admittance of other species the position of the Bulgarian representatives in the EU will be of great importance.

**We expect GERB to keep up their promise given in public in the last weeks, namely that they will work for anti-GMO policy on the EU level.**

So, the struggle goes on. We believe that the awareness, involvement and citizens' active position are the only guarantor for the good quality development of our country and we are heartily greeting all the tireless and actively involved citizens.

A bit more about GMO issues is available at these information links: <http://forthenature.org/media/1153>, <http://forthenature.org/media/1156>, <http://forthenature.org/news/1322>, <http://forthenature.org/documents/675>, <http://forthenature.org/media/1174>.

[forthenature.org/media/1174](http://forthenature.org/media/1174).

The Director of the National Genetic Laboratory: GMO should remain in the laboratories: <http://forthenature.org/media/1170>.

## FOR CLEAN AIR IN STARA ZAGORA

Another serious problem facing citizen resistance and activity is the illegal gas-pollution of Stara Zagora and the struggle of the citizens there for their guaranteed by the Constitution rights of clean and healthy environment. Here is some information on their actions and requests: <http://forthenature.org/news/1321>. On Todorovden Day the citizens of Stara Zagora filled the streets protesting against the gas-pollution: <http://forthenature.org/video/134>.

More links: <http://forthenature.org/actions/225>, <http://forthenature.org/media/1209>.

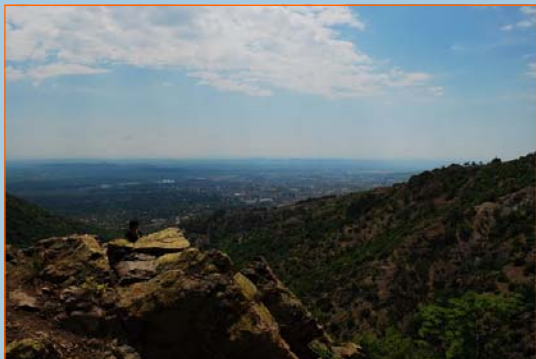
You can support the subscription list to clean air in Stara Zagora at <http://forthenature.org/petitions/14>.



*Thousands of people flooded the streets in Stara Zagora and insisted that the gas pollution be stopped and their right to breathe clean air be guaranteed.*

**Some progress was witnessed in February regarding two other serious problems:** the swapped forests and lands and the morbid ambitions of the Mayor of Sliven relating the privatization of Sinite Kamani Nature Park.

### SINITE KAMANI



The Mayor of Sliven initiated an illegal procedure for the privatization of Sinite Kamani Nature Park: <http://forthenature.org/news/1378>. On the occasion of the statements made by the mayor of Sliven Municipality Yordan Lechkov and Sliven District Governor Marin Kavrukov that the Municipality wants the

state to transfer for free to the Municipality the entire state property in Sinite Kamani Nature Park, located above the town, in order to maintain the roads and build up the sewerage, the Let Nature Remain in Bulgaria Coalition of non-government organizations and citizen groups is obliged to specify that the Sinite Kamani Nature Park is not a town garden but a protected nature area under the Bulgarian and European legislation. Details at: <http://forthenature.org/news/1380>.

### FOREST AND LAND SWAPS

Environmentalists warn not to beat about the bush as regards swapped forests: <http://forthenature.org/news/1338>.

Dnevnik Daily: State Land at the Price of Two Chewing Gums: <http://forthenature.org/media/1215>.

Sega Daily: The Forests Swapped by the State Are at Top Speed Built up with Hotels and Stables: <http://forthenature.org/media/1202>.

Dnevnik Daily: State Aids – the European and the Bulgarian per-

spective: <http://forthenature.org/media/1198>.

Dnevnik Daily: The state forest swaps executed by the “Stanishev” Cabinet and the menace from Brussels for these latter’s designation as state aid gave rise to a juridical case under which of a wrong move could cost the state tens of millions euros: <http://forthenature.org/media/1192>.

The Let Nature Remain in Bulgaria Coalition of non-government organizations and citizen groups expects the National Security Advisory Council to consider the Coalition’s proposal on the issues of the forest swaps and the state aid accorded by the former government to certain companies and individuals: <http://forthenature.org/news/1349>.

The Coalition proposes to the Prime Minister a solution of the swapped forests issue: <http://forthenature.org/news/1335>.



*Some of the most notorious swaps at the Black Sea coast were done in the region of one of the last remaining wild beaches in Bulgaria—Kara dere.*

And the various **training courses and information meetings** that we carried out by the organizations in February:

- The Biodiversity Protection course: The brown bear in Bulgaria – status and threats: <http://forthenature.org/news/1382>.
- Public discussion “On climate and people. The Bulgarian trace in Copenhagen»: <http://forthenature.org/news/1375>.
- Until 15 March 2010 was prolonged the final term of the competition announced by the Strandzha Nature Park Directorate and the Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation for proposing a slogan for the Strandzha Regional Brand: <http://forthenature.org/news/1369>.
- In February we carried out three-day training - “Presentation Skills” (<http://forthenature.org/news/1365>), aimed at:
  - acquainting the attendants with the basic communication components and their role and impact on the audience;
  - demonstrating different types of presentations, showing the difference between those, and the recommendable manner for their usage;
  - teaching the attendants to conscientiously pay attention to the body language and to use it appropriately;
  - improving the attendants’ skills in preparation of presentations;
  - increasing the attendants’ self-confidence in public conversations.
- The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) organized a working meeting dedicated to the future of protected areas: <http://forthenature.org/news/1364>.
- Publication of an information brochure “Sustainable and alternative tourism”: <http://forthenature.org/documents/687>.
- “Citizens for Rila” held up their Fifth national strategic convention on 13-14 February 2010: <http://forthenature.org/gallery/247>.
- How can civil society happen – the experience of “Save the Forest”: <http://forthenature.org/news/1356>.

- BSPB organized winter feeding up of the Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*): <http://forthenature.org/news/1355>.
- Pupils in Burgas and the Eastern Rhodopes got acquainted with the Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) and the White-Headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*): <http://forthenature.org/news/1331>.
- Know nature in order to conserve it! Under this motto the learning trip of the “Green Future” Volunteers’ Club was carried out in Sofia: <http://forthenature.org/news/1327>.
- On 2 February on the riverside of Maritsa, opposite to the Water Palace in Plovdiv, World Wetlands Day was marked: <http://forthenature.org/news/1328>.

Regretfully, also in this month did the Coalition organizations continue to receive **signals for brutal and reckless attitude to wild animals, birds and forests**.

Poisoning of wild animals located in Elhovsko: <http://forthenature.org/news/1379>.

The legs of a living bird atrociously cut! <http://forthenature.org/news/1333>.



Mediterranean bat received at the Wild Animals Rescue center: <http://forthenature.org/news/1342>.

Agalina Eco-Society, Burgas: In aid of birds! <http://forthenature.org/news/1339>.

Poachers hunting songbirds were taken hold of in Plovdiv: <http://forthenature.org/news/1336>.

"Save the Forest" signals of new tree felling: <http://forthenature.org/news/1329>.

### FORTHCOMING AND CURRENT EVENTS

Photo-competition "Bulgaria – with the rhythm of nature": <http://forthenature.org/news/1340>.

BSBP started the implementation of a pilot free scheme for aiding farmers: <http://forthenature.org/news/1332>.

On 5 and 6 March, in Vratsa, representatives of the Let Nature Remain in Bulgaria Coalition will meet with citizens: <http://forthenature.org/news/1385>.

On 16 March 2010, in Sofia, at 18:30, at the Biology Department, training will take place on the topic: "Forests and forestations. The importance of natural forests, how and when forestations can be carried out, how forests can be rehabilitated".

### SPECIAL ARTICLE

#### **Food, climate, politics. Part One: the problems**

The Copenhagen Convention at the end of last year was a great disappointment to many people expecting a final resolution of the climate change problem. "Hopenhagen", held up in the circumstances of unprecedented police presence and hundreds of arrested activists did not bring about the results dreamed of; the eco-activists and delegates from poor countries were exclusively

critical to rich countries. The G77 (this is the developing countries group including 130 UN member states) left the Copenhagen Convention and some of their delegates even accused the rich states in genocide. The notion of the developing countries is that it is the rich countries that are immediately responsible for the accumulated emissions and climate problems; hence, these rich states must repay their "climate debt". Climate policy does not come down only to the conflict between rich and poor countries. The main issues involved here are the interests of big businesses which, in case they are obliged to reduce production and do not succeed in getting re-oriented towards sustainable technologies, will suffer unprecedented losses. Indicative of this was also the mass presence of the big business in the course of the Convention. It is worth pointing out that at the last moment the organizers decided to deny the access to hundreds of ecological and social non-government organizations but they did not deny it to a single corporation.

Although the results of the conference were none it was a great step in itself as it demonstrated that there is a global current consensus on the necessity of urgent human interference to avert eventual social and ecological crises which could be caused by climate changes.

The true reasons underlying climate changes very often are disguised as "anthropogenous", as if the changes are almost a natural result of the existence of mankind. This perspective leaves out the fact that historically the accumulation of carbon emissions is the product of industrialization in the last several hundreds of years. And the personal manner of living (whether we go to work riding a bus or bike) eventually has a negligent impact on climate in comparison with that of heavy industry. Not all of us pollute in the same way; in the long run the greatest polluter is the big business in the rich countries. According to Via Campesina (the biggest world organization of petty farmers) 50% of all carbon emissions are emitted through the activities of agricultural businesses and the globalization of corporate agriculture. This is a fact that is skipped by the media. This is happening on all levels:

transport, deforestation, energy quantity for the production and usage of fertilizers, soil fertility reduction and others.

We, the citizens of Bulgaria, are not taking into account that we are inextricably bound up with the global changes in agriculture. These processes have not existed for ever. Agri-business has not always been so powerful, its present position is derived from the policies of the EU and USA during the last 30-40 years, when the state undertook a series of measures to consolidate agriculture – measures such as, for example, the significant increase of agri-business subsidies. Around 50% of the EU budget is spent for agri-business subsidies and receivers are the big owners as Danone. The recent attempts for introducing GM crop production in the country are indicative exactly of the integration of Bulgarian agriculture in the world market which is dominated by the agri-business subsidies. Farmers' protests in Greece were incited by absolutely the same problems: the state is favoring big entrepreneurs and small agricultural farmers are left in the background, getting indebted and quite frequently forced to give up their activities to the big companies. The American explorer of global food policy, Michael Pollan, says that in the recent 30-40 years food production has passed into the hands of agribusiness, owing to state policies, as well. Pollan says also that food industry is the most serious source of carbon emissions. Apart from being responsible for ecological problems it is responsible also for grave health and social problems. Corporate agriculture is of lower quality due to its striving to perpetually decrease expenses and exert control on immediate agricultural producers. GM crops are a typical example of it. On the one hand, there are not sufficient scientific data for the safety of GMO. On the other hand, species are created which bind farmers with patent owners and in this way the entire food provision might fall into the hands of a few companies.

Centralization of agriculture means also increase of the danger of food crises. For example, at the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008 there was a grave food crisis caused by the price rise of foods. It provoked many riots all over the world. The underlying factors were many (such as the petrol price rise and the produc-

tion of the so called "biofuels") but eventually all the reasons can be brought to the global monopolization of agriculture on the part of agribusiness.

The British scientist and activist Raj Patel describes the atrocities of the contemporary corporate globalization of agriculture in his book "Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System". He says that it destroys peasant communities, poisons poor town inhabitants, has a brutal attitude to animals, needs excessive quantities of fossil fuels and water, contributes to global climate change - in the final reckoning it brings about grave health, social, and ecological problems. Patel shows the inseparable connection between, on the one hand, 1 billion people enduring obesity problems in the rich countries, and on the other hand, 1 billion starving people in the poor states. He reckons that this inequality is structurally necessary for the very existence of the corporate world food system.

Of course, we should not put the blame on technology as such. The problems do not originate from technology but from what it is used for. We should not forget that the industrialization of agriculture has in reality brought about a multiple rise in food production. The bad thing here is that agriculture is not organized in a socially fair manner and in conformity with nature. At the present moment agritechnology and food production are subordinated to the big businesses' interests. Thus health, social security and ecology are left lagging behind the corporate profits interests.

To be continued... **Food, climate, politics. Part Two: the solutions**

*The article is written by Georgy Medarov from the EU "For the Earth" under the project "Creation of co-ordination. Trade for development: aid for trade development" with the financial support of the EU.*