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HOUSE MEMORIAL 84

48TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2007

INTRODUCED BY

Ben Lujan

A MEMORIAL

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIGENOUS AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE AND NATIVE SEEDS TO NEW MEXICO'S CULTURAL HERITAGE AND FOOD SECURITY.

WHEREAS, the ability to grow food is the culmination of countless generations of sowing and harvesting seeds, which are an inheritance passed hand to hand from our ancestors to us and to our children and grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico's native foods and crops are the result of the intermixing of Mesoamerican, pueblo, tribal and Hispano cultures that created a unique and diverse indigenous agricultural system and land-based culture; and

WHEREAS, traditional agricultural systems and native seeds provide the basis for local food production in acequia, pueblo and tribal communities, represent the foundation for local food

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1 security and contribute to the health and well-being of our
2 communities; and

3 WHEREAS, in recent reports, New Mexico has been ranked as
4 having one of the highest rates of food insecurity in the
5 country, indicating that the ability to produce locally grown
6 food is in need of dramatic improvement; and

7 WHEREAS, strengthening local agriculture and indigenous
8 agricultural practices is a vital strategy for strengthening
9 food security at the local and state levels and also enables
10 pueblo, tribal and acequia communities to produce food that is
11 culturally and spiritually meaningful; and

12 WHEREAS, traditional agriculture and seed-saving is part
13 of a culture characterized by communities and families coming
14 together for communal work such as cleaning acequias and
15 preparing fields as well as for ceremony, prayers and
16 blessings, thereby binding our communities, traditions and
17 cultures together; and

18 WHEREAS, corporations are manipulating seeds, animals and
19 wild plants through genetic engineering by cross-species
20 manipulation of genetic material and are cloning animals for
21 reproduction, the effect of which on the environment and on
22 human health has not been studied adequately and is not well
23 understood; and

24 WHEREAS, despite unknown health and safety effects,
25 labeling of genetically engineered or cloned foods is not

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1 required; and

2 WHEREAS, corporations are patenting genetic material and
3 the processes of genetic modification, and corporations have
4 claims on seeds that prohibit farmers from continuing the seed-
5 saving practices of their ancestors; and

6 WHEREAS, genetically engineered crops, such as maize in
7 Oaxaca, Mexico, and canola in Canada, have escaped into the
8 environment and contaminated native seeds and wild plants; and

9 WHEREAS, corporations have sued individual farmers when
10 corporate-owned genetic material has drifted to neighboring
11 fields and crops, thereby undermining the ability of farmers to
12 grow food and the viability of the reproduction of seeds; and

13 WHEREAS, countries such as Japan and England, and some
14 counties in Africa, have refused genetically modified foods and
15 prohibit the introduction of genetically engineered crops on
16 their lands because of unknown health effects; and

17 WHEREAS, traditional farmers from tribal, pueblo and
18 acequia communities have expressed concern about genetic
19 engineering and patenting of seeds as a threat to their
20 cultural and spiritual connection to the earth, as a violation
21 of their rights to save seeds and grow food and as a theft of
22 cultural property; and

23 WHEREAS, traditional farmers from pueblo and acequia
24 communities have come together for a ceremonial seed exchange
25 and a declaration of seed sovereignty between the traditional

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1 Native American farmers association and the New Mexico acequia
2 association; and

3 WHEREAS, since the signing of that declaration,
4 resolutions in support of seed sovereignty have been passed by
5 the Pueblos of Tesuque and Pojoaque, the eight northern Indian
6 pueblos council, the all Indian pueblo council and the national
7 congress of American Indians; and

8 WHEREAS, the traditional Native American farmers'
9 association and the New Mexico acequia association have formed
10 the New Mexico food and seed sovereignty alliance and are
11 seeking support for several objectives, including the
12 following:

13 A. protecting native seeds from genetic
14 contamination;

15 B. increasing the extent of the cultivation of
16 native seeds and the raising of small herds of livestock in
17 pueblos and acequia communities;

18 C. supporting the livelihood of traditional farmers
19 and ranchers with financial and educational resources, leading
20 to improved viability of farming; and

21 D. increasing the extent to which locally grown
22 food is served within the same community in which it is grown,
23 particularly by tribal, public and community institutions;

24 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
25 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the house of

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1 representatives recognize the significance of native seeds to
2 the cultural heritage and food security of New Mexico; and

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the house of representatives
4 support the efforts of the New Mexico food and seed sovereignty
5 alliance to prevent genetic contamination of native seeds,
6 strengthen small-scale agriculture and increase the cultivation
7 of native crops in their communities; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Mexico department of
9 agriculture be requested to collaborate with the New Mexico
10 food and seed sovereignty alliance in supporting traditional
11 farmers in their communities, protecting native seeds and
12 increasing the cultivation of native seeds by developing
13 specific policy recommendations; and

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
15 transmitted to the governor, the director of the New Mexico
16 department of agriculture and the secretary of Indian affairs.