

## Genetic Engineering

### German farmers protest against pig patent (Deutsche Welle, 16 Apr 2009)

1 German farmers and environmentalists have together held a protest  
at the European Patent Office to block a genetic patent application  
from getting the green light. The patent would protect the breeding  
of pigs that possess a naturally occurring gene linked to rapid  
5 growth.

The 400 strong group of protestors came together in Munich  
appealing against a patent granted to a US company, arguing that  
there should be "no patents on life". They filed an appeal seeking to  
overturn a 2005 patent application (Patent EP 1651777) filed by US  
10 biotech giant Monsanto, and now owned by Newsham Choice  
Genetics.

The patent aims to protect a pig breeding process based on genetic  
analysis. But critics warn that the patent could be extended to cover  
the animals' genes themselves, and farmers fear that they could one  
15 day be forced to pay royalties for their traditional livestock.

The German states of Bavaria and Hesse also oppose the patent  
application and have already signaled their intention to introduce a  
general ban on all patents covering animals and plants.

"Corporations are always trying to bypass the regulations to achieve  
20 access to animals and plants. For this reason all legal loopholes  
should be closed at the EU level so large companies do not dictate  
what is bred and what lands up on consumers' plates," said Gerd  
Sonnleitner, the head of the German Farming Association, calling  
the patent a "threat to free breeding."

25 The farmers' association president also called for more research  
into so-called green biotechnologies to investigate the risks and  
opportunities involved. [264]

URL: <http://www.pigprogress.net/news/german-farmers-protest-against-pig-patent-2839.html>



Cartoon for  
[Corporate Watch](http://www.corporatewatch.com), 2000  
URL: <http://www.shtig.net/corps>

### Annotations:

Newsham Choice Genetics – headquarters in West Des Moines, Iowa

royalties – payment made to the patent holder

loopholes - small mistake in a law that makes it possible to avoid doing sth., e.g. paying taxes

### Assignments

1) Point out the issues prompting German farmers to protest according to the text.

2) Relate the cartoon to the text saying how it could be used by farmers to present their cause in public. In analysing the cartoonist's choice of words and graphic details, consider how the cartoon might influence the readers.

3) Give your own opinion on the questions raised by the text and the cartoon.

Erwartungen Teil 1	Summary	
	Introductory statements: Title, date, source, location, theme: Monsanto – contentious pig patents	
	it is the European Patent Office's job to grant a patent on a pig gene that is responsible for rapid growth – the farmers try to put pressure on this institution	
	the patent originates in the USA and has not yet been acknowledged in Europe	
	as the gene occurs in nature there is a danger that the pigs as a whole might be patented, which means the farmers have to buy the pigs instead of being able to breed them themselves	
	in Bavaria and Hesse there is opposition to the whole idea of accepting patents relating to livestock	
	the interests of producers and consumers should be safeguarded on the EU level to curb in the political clout of large companies	
	it is necessary to carry out scientific research to protect the public against any dangers posed by biotechnology	
<b>Analysis</b>		
	introductory remark: the cartoon predates the text by nine years and it deals with beef rather than with pork, but in principle it deals with the same issue of GM food	
<b>Verbal Elements</b>		
	brandname "Nonsanto" is a denigration of the Monsanto company name	the negation indicates rejection of the product
	"junky" and "steroid" are references to drugs	the intended association is that of poisonous stuff that poses a serious health risk; fear is instilled into the recipient
	the captions "fraud", "stealth" and "dope" are references to business practises of the Monsanto company for which it has been branded by the media	the criticism extends to lobbying practises by which Monsanto has sought to influence legislation affecting its business operations
<b>Graphic Elements</b>		
	the beef head and the bilious green and artificially pink colours, which allude to a poisonous mix, are reminiscent of Frankenfood	repellent attributes are the opposite of an appetizer
<b>Conclusion</b>		
	the overall impression is that the biotechnological innovation that Monsanto and Newsham Choice Genetics are trying to introduce to European markets pose satanic threats to consumers and are not embraced by German farmers and their political representatives	
<b>Evaluation</b>		
	Laying out the dialectical nature of the problem	
	The pros: increased productivity and larger profits for farmers without any health risks; positive impact on food supplies on a worldwide scale	
	the cons: reduction of the genetic pool, lack of research into long-term health risks to the animals and the consumers; negative effects on competitors in developing countries	
	Conclusion: Personal statement on the basis of the argumentation above	