

Protectionism at root of seed complaint

The Jan. 13 Catholic Review contained a small but accusatory note. The headline “Ghana cardinal: GM crops breed form of slavery” indicated that the Cardinal Peter Turkson, is angry about genetically-modified (GM) seeds. The tone of the article blames GM crops for all manner of troubles in Africa.

Upon closer inspection, Cardinal Turkson was merely sore that GM seeds aren’t available for *free*, and his farmers suffer mainly from the armed conflicts going on around them. This is essentially a complaint against the level of charity of some international corporations, not against the actual GM seeds.

What is far more crippling to the farmers of Africa is that European nations reject crops grown by GM methods, and won’t buy such grain. The European opposition to GM crops is entirely motivated by protectionism for their own farmers against imports from America, but the Africans are caught in the middle of that fight. They’re the ones facing closed markets who suffer economically.

The real lack of charity is by the Europeans. They’re hurting the Africans far more than the Americans, who go right on selling GM corn syrup to Asians and others who recognize that there is nothing harmful about GM crops. Cardinal Turkson, who heads the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, would do better to have the Vatican denounce European protectionism.