



**RAFI**

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## *The Captain Hook Awards* *For Outstanding Achievements in BioPiracy* **The Coalition Against BioPiracy (CAB) Presents the much uncoveted “Hook” at the Biodiversity Convention in Nairobi**

Among those on the glory trail to the Hook Awards are the U.S. Government – a winner or runner-up in several categories; the Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties (UPOV), a Geneva-based intellectual property convention that, according to Hook’s jurists, has done less than almost anyone to protect plant varieties from piracy; and, the Crown Prince of Liechtenstein for coveting Basmati rice. Honours will also go to those who have opposed biopiracy. Among those to receive awards are the quinoa farmers of Bolivia and the people and government of The Philippines and India, for their success in defeating predatory patents and defending their intellectual integrity.

**“Ignorance No Excuse for Monopoly”:** The Hook Awards are not an allegation of illegality, according to Pat Mooney, Executive Director of RAFI, and a member of the Coalition Against BioPiracy. “Most of the Award-winners have done nothing wrong legally,” Mooney insists. “Some winners have – or had – patents which were certainly unacceptable – but that’s a matter of civil law. In most cases, the ‘pirates’ have acted out of ignorance. But ignorance of diversity is no excuse for monopoly. They have no right to claim ownership over the indigenous knowledge or sovereign genetic resources of other peoples.” “Biopiracy is the inevitable consequence of international agreements such as the Biodiversity Convention that have no real capacity to regulate bioprospecting or to ensure benefit-sharing,” Alejandro Argumedo of the Indigenous Peoples’ Biodiversity Network (IPBN) argues. “Without agreed rules and monitoring mechanisms, all bioprospecting becomes biopiracy.” Among the few real “winners” in the upcoming Nairobi Awards ceremony are the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) for their energetic defense of a trust agreement that prevents agricultural germplasm from being purloined and patented. The Awards ceremony will be held informally during the Convention on Biological Diversity taking place in Nairobi.

**The Captain Hook Awards:** For a number of years the Coalition Against Biopiracy (CAB), which is a coalition of civil society organizations including IPBN (Indigenous Peoples’ Biodiversity Network); SEARICE (South East Asian Regional Institute for Community Education); RAFI; and many local and regional organizations with which they work, has been accepting nominations that single out foremost aspirants for the uncoveted BioPirates titles. At the COP 5 in Nairobi, corporations, academics, and individual entrepreneurs will find out if they are the winners of *The Captain Hook Awards*. In Nairobi, the CAB will announce the winners in a ceremony, and the official *Captain Hook Awards* will be presented to the most deserving BioPirates in the categories of Worst National Behaviour, Worst International Convention, Greediest, Most Offensive, Most Dangerous, and more. “This is one award that no one should want,” laughs Alejandro Argumedo, Executive Director of IPBN. “Still, even though most of the winners knew they were nominated, they continue to plunder the resources of Southern communities.”

At the same time, the Coalition Against BioPiracy (CAB) will honour those who have fought against the BioPirates with the Cog awards. "We called them the Cog Awards because Cogs were ships designed to repel pirate attacks," noted Elpidio Peria who manages the Southeast Asian Anti-BioPiracy Program of SEARICE in the Philippines. "The winners of the Cog Awards are the true heroes in the David and Goliath fight over BioPiracy, since these individuals are on the front lines defending their traditional knowledge against such blatant and immoral theft," says Peria. The importance of those defending traditional knowledge and rights against biopiracy became clear this week with the exciting news that the challenge against the Neem patent was upheld in the European courts.

**Sixth BioPiracy Update Released:** RAFI just released a report outlining the continuing abuse of intellectual property rights over the innovation and knowledge of rural and indigenous peoples. This new BioPiracy Update, the sixth since RAFI coined the term in 1992, shows that piracies are on the increase and governments are doing nothing useful about it. "The sheer volume of piracies continues to increase," says Neth Dano, Executive Director of SEARICE. "When RAFI and the Australian Heritage Seeds Curators Association (HSCA) released a report entitled *Plant Breeders' Wrongs* last year documenting 147 suspected cases of institutional biopiracy, many argued that these were just isolated cases. This report makes the absurdity of that claim even clearer. In the face of such manifest wrongdoing, governments and the international community must act to ensure that the Biodiversity Convention makes biopiracy a major issue at its Fifth Conference of the Parties (COP5) being held May 15 - 26, 2000 in Nairobi, Kenya," adds Dano.

**Poaching for Profits:** From Chiapas to the Punjab, the state sanctioned and supported abuses hover between the ridiculous (a patent on a traditional Mexican yellow bean bought by an American in Mexico) and the outrageous (a U.S. patent on Basmati, the "crown jewel" of Asian rice). The biopirates' booty includes staple foods, livestock, marine species, and medicinal plants. "These cases demonstrate the power of exclusive monopoly patents to disrupt and distort domestic and international markets for Southern farmers, and to appropriate the innovative genius of indigenous peoples and rural societies," notes Julie Delahanty of RAFI.

All COP 5 delegates are invited to attend *The Captain Hook Awards' Ceremony* in Nairobi. The ceremony will take place in the main downstairs lobby of UNEP near the registration desk at 1:00pm on Thursday, May 18, 2000.

**For RAFI's Sixth Annual BioPiracy Update, *Captain Hook, the Cattle Rustlers and the Plant Privateers: Biopiracy of Marine, Plant, and Livestock Continues* and for a sneak preview of *The Captain Hook Awards*, please go to the RAFI Communique "Biopiracy – RAFI's Sixth Annual Update" on RAFI's web site: <http://www.rafi.org> or directly to: <http://www.rafi.org/web/docus/pdfs/badawards.pdf>**

**AND [http://www.rafi.org/web/docus/pdfs/hk\\_g\\_sml.pdf](http://www.rafi.org/web/docus/pdfs/hk_g_sml.pdf)**

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**All can also be reached from May 15 to 26 only at the Panafric Hotel in Nairobi.**

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**RAFI (The Rural Advancement Foundation International) is an international civil society organization based in Canada. RAFI is dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and to the socially responsible development of technologies useful to rural societies. RAFI is concerned about the loss of agricultural biodiversity, and the impact of intellectual property on farmers and food security.**

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