

The ‘Green Blob’ is threatening lives in Africa

By Matthew Holehouse, The Telegraph, 24 Feb 2015

Owen Paterson, the former environment secretary, will this week accuse the European Union and Greenpeace of condemning people in the developing world to death by refusing to accept genetically modified crops.

In a strongly-worded denunciation of the “green blob” of officials and pressure groups, Mr Paterson will warn that a food revolution that could save Africa from hunger is being held back.

Liken Greenpeace to the Luddites

He will liken Greenpeace to the Luddites who smashed textile machinery in the nineteenth century, and accuse the EU of “neo-colonialism at its worst” by restricting food production within its own borders.

Speaking in Pretoria, South Africa, on Tuesday, Mr Paterson will say that the world is on the cusp of a green revolution, of the kind that fed a billion people in the 1960s and 1970s as the world’s population soared.

Green revolution imperilled

But such a transformation is being imperilled by well-meaning Westerners who are imposing their food “fetishes” on the developing world, he will warn, in the single greatest challenge in the modern world.

The use of genetically modified crops is expanding in the United States and South Africa, and approval has been given to trials of drought resistant strands in the Middle East and Africa.

Mr Paterson will accuse the “green blob” of “mythmaking and misinformation” by opposing such trials, even where they are supported by farmers.

He will accuse the European Union of “strong-arming” African nations into not growing GM crops, and threatening to cut off imports if they refuse.

Protests from Greenpeace

He will also condemn the scrapping of the role of EU science adviser, held by Professor Anne Glover, a supporter of GM crops, after protests from Greenpeace.

Some 6,000 children a day die in the developing world due to vitamin A deficiency – but the deaths could be prevented by modified Gold Rice that has been opposed by Greenpeace, he will say.

"This is a time of extraordinary opportunity for Africa. Progress in the plant sciences is opening up the promise of a second Green Revolution, one that can not only feed the 9 to 10 billion people that will inhabit our planet in 2050, but feed them well – one that can finally end the shame of the nearly one billion who still go to bed every night hungry and malnourished," he will say.

I'm proud of standing up to Green lobby, says Owen Paterson

Organised, fanatical antagonism to progress and science

"This is also a time, however, of great mischief, in which many individuals and even governments are turning their backs on progress. Not since the original Luddites smashed cotton mill machinery in early 19th century England, have we seen such an organised, fanatical antagonism to progress and science. These enemies of the Green Revolution call themselves 'progressive', but their agenda could hardly be more backward-looking and regressive.

"They call themselves humanitarians and environmentalists. But their policies would condemn billions to hunger, poverty and underdevelopment. And their insistence on mandating primitive, inefficient farming techniques would decimate the earth's remaining wild spaces, devastate species and biodiversity, and leave our natural ecology poorer as a result.

Public officials keep each other supplied with lavish funds

"I call them the "Green Blob" – a reference to a 1950s Sci-Fi movie starring Steve McQueen in which a blob-like alien attacks earth and swallows everything in its path: the environmental pressure groups, renewable energy companies and some public officials who keep each other well supplied with lavish funds, scare stories and green tape.

"This tangled triangle of unelected busybodies claims to have the interest of the planet and the countryside at heart, but it is increasingly clear that it is focusing on the wrong issues and doing real harm while profiting handsomely."