



ETC Group
News Release
16 December 2005
www.etcgroup.org

ETC Group Releases New Report on Corporate Power, *Oligopoly, Inc. 2005*

As governments at the 6th WTO Ministerial in Hong Kong bristle with the thorny politics of trade, the report that ETC Group releases today, *Oligopoly, Inc. 2005*, serves as a reminder that what looks like buying and selling between countries is most often the redistribution of capital among subsidiaries of the same parent multinational corporation.

ETC Group's new report is available at www.etcgroup.org

In *Oligopoly, Inc. 2005* ETC Group revisits the sectors analyzed in *Oligopoly, Inc. 2003* and finds that corporate concentration – not only in food and agriculture, but in all sectors related to the products and processes of life – has increased remarkably since the last review two years ago. Since then:

- the world's top 10 seed companies have increased their control from one-third to one-half of the global seed trade
- the top 10 biotech enterprises have raised their share from just over half to nearly three-quarters of world biotech sales
- the market share of the top 10 pesticide manufacturers rose modestly, from 80 to 84%, but industry analysts predict that only **three** companies will survive the next decade
- the top 10 pharmaceutical companies control almost 59% market share of the world's leading 98 drug firms (previously the top 10 accounted for 53% market share of 118 companies)

Hope Shand, ETC Group's research director, observes, "It comes as no surprise that corporate concentration has increased dramatically since ETC Group's *Oligopoly, Inc. 2003* report. The trend line is distressing and the predictions of new mergers and greater concentration are alarming. What we are witnessing is ever more concentrated control over every aspect of life."

As the input-ers and the output-ers battle for survival and supremacy, ETC Group's report shows that a subterranean struggle is underway at the nano-scale to control the fundamental building blocks of life and nature. Corporate investment in nanobiotechnology (or, synthetic biology) could give ultimate control to a very different set of corporate actors. In the coming decades,

nano-scale technologies, particularly synthetic biology, could make geography, raw materials, and even labour, irrelevant.

ETC Group's executive director Pat Mooney explains, "In a very real sense, technology is poised to surpass trade as the defining feature of comparative advantage in the 21st century. While corporate concentration dominates commodity trade, proprietary technologies spanning multiple industrial sectors are the royal flush – the winning hand that beats all. The message for Hong Kong is clear: Technology Trumps Trade." In particular, countries in the global South need to consider both corporate concentration and emerging technology trends to avoid dead-end trade deals.

On December 12th in Hong Kong, ETC Group reported on a study prepared for the South Centre that looks at the potential impact of new nano-scale technologies on Commodity Dependent Developing Countries and argues that "technology will trump trade" in the 21st century. The report can be downloaded from www.southcentre.org.

For more information:

Hope Shand and Kathy Jo Wetter (USA)

tel: +1 (919) 960-5223

hope@etcgroup.org

kjo@etcgroup.org

Pat Mooney (Ottawa)

tel: +1 (613) 241-2267

etc@etcgroup.org

Silvia Ribeiro (Mexico)

tel: +52 55 55 632 664

silvia@etcgroup.org