

Federal Environment Ministry regrets approval by Federal Research Ministry of iron enrichment experiment

A spokesperson for the Federal Environment Ministry has released the following statement on the decision by the Federal Research Ministry (BMBF) to approve the controversial LOHAFEX marine fertilisation experiment:

The Federal Environment Ministry (BMU) takes note with regret of the decision by the Federal Research Ministry to approve the LOHAFEX experiment. Our reservations concerning LOHAFEX will remain until there is conclusive clarification of whether this project is compatible with the decisions of the 9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The BMU is of the opinion that this is not the case since the experiments are not carried out in coastal waters and independent monitoring of the experiment is not guaranteed. Furthermore, the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) considers the "risk assessment" to contain gaps that should have been clarified.

Internationally, marine fertilisation is extremely controversial as there are doubts to the effectiveness of the method. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) - the joint scientific advisory body of the Federal Research and Federal Environment Ministry - have repeatedly highlighted in their reports that the risks of marine fertilisation regarding the indirect impacts on marine ecosystems are very hard to assess. They therefore reject this process.

In contrast to the assertion by the Federal Research Ministry that this is purely a case of basic research, the head of the project at the Alfred Wegener Institute (AWI) was quoted in a Spiegel interview as saying that the objections to iron enrichment would be "swept aside" when helplessness in the face of climate change became apparent.

The AWI project head thus clearly contradicts the Federal Research Ministry. The comments by the AWI project head in support of marine fertilisation were a primary cause of the critical international response. The Indian media, too, in part considers the project to be the launch of a lucrative market worth billions. In the Federal Environment Ministry's view, attempting to halt climate change by interfering with our marine ecosystems is a disastrous approach. This scientifically unsound thinking has been a direct cause of the climate crisis and is in no way suited to solving the problem.

The Federal Environment and Federal Research Ministry agreed that iron enrichment must not be a climate policy instrument. What is important now is to make this clear to the AWI and to ensure that the vision of a future market for "marine fertilisation" does not develop in India or anywhere else in the world.