

# African Faith Leaders Call on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to Drop African “Green Revolution”

By [Food Tank](#)

Global Research, August 10, 2021

[Food Tank](#)

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the “Translate Website” drop down menu on the top banner of our home page (Desktop version).

Visit and follow us on Instagram at [@crg\\_globalresearch](#).

\*\*\*

*In August 2021, an alliance of African faith leaders delivered a powerful message to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: Stop promoting failing and harmful high-input Green Revolution programs, such as the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA).*

At a virtual press conference, the Southern African Faith Communities’ Environment Institute (SAFCEI) released its public [letter](#) to the Gates Foundation, which it sent two months ago with [500 signatures from African faith and farming communities](#). They have received neither an acknowledgment nor a response from the Foundation.

“Faith leaders are witnessing the negative impact of industrialized farming to the land and in their communities and have come together in this letter to say to the Gates Foundation: please re-think your approach to farming in Africa,” says SAFCEI Executive Director **Francesca de Gasparis**. Farmers and faith leaders speaking at the press conference urged donors to shift their funding to more effective and sustainable approaches such as agroecology.

## Crucial challenge at a critical time

Their call comes at a critical time. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 66 percent of people (724 million) now suffer moderate to severe food insecurity, up from 51 percent in 2014, according to the [State of Food Insecurity](#) report recently released by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. As food insecurity increases — intensified by the ongoing crises of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic — the United Nations is convening a Food Systems Summit in September to address global failures to reduce hunger in line with commitments made in the Sustainable Development goals. The summit, which is led by AGRA President **Agnes Kalibata**, is mired in controversy, accused by farmer groups of promoting the same kinds of industrialized agricultural development that have failed to address the hunger crisis.

The letter to the Gates Foundation detailed the negative impacts that industrialized agriculture has had on the land and in the communities of faith leaders from around the continent. At the press conference, presenters emphasized the need for the Gates Foundation and other donors to break with the current agriculture agenda and instead invest in more regenerative, agroecological approaches.

“Farmers have become wary of programs that promote monoculture and chemical-intensive farming. They have lost control of their seeds. Now, they say they are being held hostage on their own farms,” says Celestine Otieno, a permaculture farmer from Kenya. “Is this food security or food slavery?”

South African agroecology farmer Busisiwe Mgangxela reiterated that farmers practicing agroecology “do not feed the soil with chemicals, we feed it with organic matter and fertility from other companion plants.” As the letter details, input-intensive monoculture agriculture damages ecosystems, threatens local livelihoods, increases climate vulnerabilities and undermines smallholder farmers engaged in more sustainable methods of production.

**Fletcher Harper**, director of GreenFaith, an international network, was direct:

“The plan of displacing millions of small holding farmers, using an industrial monoculture approach to farming, lacing the soil and water supplies with toxic chemicals and concentrating ownership of the means of production and land ownership in a small elite is an immoral and dangerous vision that must be stopped.”

### **AGRA in the crosshairs**

**Anne Maina**, national coordinator of the Biodiversity and Biosafety Association of Kenya (BIBA), highlights the negative impacts and lack of accountability of AGRA. Launched in 2006 by the Gates Foundation in partnership the Rockefeller Foundation, AGRA [set goals](#) of doubling crop productivity and incomes for 30 million small-scale farming households while halving food insecurity in 20 focus countries by 2020. As IATP’s Timothy A. Wise documented in a [report last year](#), the deadline has passed, and productivity has improved only marginally, poverty remains high and the number of “undernourished” people in AGRA’s 13 focus countries had increased 30 percent by 2018.

BIBA and other groups engaged with AGRA demanding evidence to counter these findings, but Maina says they received no substantive answers. Even AGRA’s own [2020 Annual Report](#) offers little convincing evidence of success.

According to SAFCEI, another insidious aspect of the Gates Foundation’s efforts in Africa is the foundation’s attempt to influence and restructure seed laws. “80% of non-certified seeds come from millions of smallholder farmers who recycle and exchange seeds each year,” SAFCEI reports in its [press statement at the event](#), “building an ‘open-source knowledge bank’ of seeds that cost little to nothing but have all the nutritional value needed to sustain these communities. In contrast, the approach supported by the Gates Foundation threatens to replace seed systems diversity and the agro-biodiversity system that is critical for human and ecosystem health and replace it with a privatized, corporate approach that will reduce food systems resilience.”

SAFCEI director de Gasparis is clear on the social and environmental stakes: “What African

farmers need is support to find communal solutions that increase climate resilience, rather than top-down profit-driven industrial-scale farming systems. When it comes to the climate, African faith communities are urging the world to think twice before pushing a technical and corporate farming approach," she says.

Summarizing the demands of African faith communities, **Rev. Wellington Sibanda**, intern resident minister in South Africa, says, "We can't keep quiet as faith leaders. We call on the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to shift its funding into agroecological farming."

\*

Note to readers: Please click the share buttons above or below. Follow us on Instagram, @crg\_globalresearch. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

*Featured image is from Food Tank*

The original source of this article is [Food Tank](#)  
Copyright © [Food Tank](#), [Food Tank](#), 2021

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: **[Food Tank](#)**

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)  
[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)