

False Solution to Hunger in Africa

: The Gates Foundation-Led 'Green Revolution'

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Friends of the Earth International

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GATES FOUNDATION-LED GREEN REVOLUTION PROMOTES FALSE SOLUTIONS TO HUNGER IN AFRICA

Friends of the Earth International warns against damaging industrial farming promoted by the Gates Foundation at the Agricultural Green Revolution Forum 2012, Arusha, Tanzania on 26-28 September.

ARUSHA (TANZANIA) / LONDON (UK), September 25, 2012 - Donors controlling the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) are representing the interests of biotechnology corporations rather than African small farmers, warns Friends of the Earth International on the eve of the annual AGRA Forum in Tanzania.

Multi-million dollar investments from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation -a major AGRA donor- into shares in biotech corporations, and revolving doors between donors and these corporations skew the agenda of AGRA in favor of profit-based, corporate-led farming rather than farming benefiting local people and small farmers. [1]

"It is time African Governments stop bowing to corporate donors and instead put farmers in the driver's seat, and focus on funding ecological methods and preserving local seeds. Africa can feed itself with ecological agriculture and it is small farmers themselves who are the most important investors in farming. Through AGRA, multinational corporations are trying to control our seeds, land, food and then our lives. AGRA is not in the best interest of Africans, it is a trojan horse for agribusiness," says Mariann Bassey from Friends of the Earth Nigeria.

The bulk of projects funded by the Gates Foundation and its brainchild AGRA favor technological solutions for high-input industrial farming methods. These include patented seeds, fertilizers and lobbying for genetically modified crops. [2]

Evidence from the roll-out of genetically modified crops in other countries shows that these crops push farmers into debt, cause irreversible environmental damage and encourage land concentration. [3]

In March 2011 the UN issued a report urging 'eco-farming' as the best strategy for improving farming in the developing world. The report's author challenged the wisdom of

the Gates Foundation's approach in agricultural development. [4]

"If AGRA carries on with its greenwash revolution, Africans will lose traditional and ecological farming that can feed people in the face of climate change. Instead they will have a toxic system that pushes farmers onto a chemical treadmill. This will be a disaster for their livelihoods and the environment. This is the opposite of what we need," says Kirtana Chandrasekaran, Friends of the Earth International Food Sovereignty coordinator.

Sustainable family farming, agro-ecological production models and strong local markets have been recognized as the best way to feed people and to protect the planet. [5]

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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NOTES TO EDITORS

[1] For more information read <http://www.seattleglobaljustice.org/agra-watch/>

[2] For more information read a commentary by Mariann Bassey at <http://www.foei.org/en/resources/publications/pdfs/2012/agra2019s-technology-push-in-africa/view>

[3] Governments are being forced to protect farmers and citizens from genetically modified crops to combat biotech corporations' stranglehold over farmers, and health scares from escalating pesticide use, according to a 2011 report online at <http://www.foei.org/en/what-we-do/climate-biodiversity-finance/latest-news-old/who-benefits-from-gm-crops>

[4] For more information read the 2011 UN report 'Agro-ecology and the right to food' at <http://www.srfood.org/index.php/en/component/content/article/1-latest-news/1174-report-agroecology-and-the-right-to-food>

[5] In April 2008 a study by 400 multi-disciplinary scientists and several international organisations (the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, or IAASTD) concluded that agro-ecology, local trade and supporting small farmers is the best way forward to combat hunger and poverty. For more information read the assessment at <http://www.agassessment.org/>

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in 76 countries and more than 2 million individual members and supporters

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