

A WEALTH OF ALTERNATIVES

A Global Movement for Food Sovereignty

"Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. ... It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations."

-Declaration of Nyéléni - Selingue, Mali - 2007

Can Sustainability Feed the World?

Yes!

There are many highly productive organic methods that promote biodiversity and have been adapted to diverse growing conditions. But the system must be socially and economically sustainable as well. "Feeding the world" is less about yield than it is about the right and power of small-scale farmers to build agricultural systems that work for them and their communities.



Photo Credit: Mike Blyth

Rethinking "Development"



Image: yasserbooley.wordpress.com

African civil society has long demanded fairer policies from the Global North: an end to colonialism and neo-colonialism, repeal of trade-distorting agricultural subsidies, and forgiveness of debt. Africans have challenged trade-related intellectual property rights, genetic engineering, and corporatism, and have sought to define their own development programs according to their priorities, resources, and expertise.

"If you want to do an agriculture experiment in Africa, experiment with taking away subsidies in the West for one year,"

-Kwame Amezah, the assistant director of extension services in Ghana's Ministry of Food and Agriculture (reprinted in GRAIN 2007)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Join our listserv to receive info, articles, & updates

Become a member of CAGJ

Sign up for CAGJ's E-newsletter

Join CAGJ's Facebook Page

Watch our website for upcoming events



Illustration by Rini Templeton

Get Involved in the AGRA Watch campaign:

AGRA Watch meeting times vary.

Email agrawatch@seattleglobaljustice.org for more info.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & FURTHER READING

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Learn more on AGRA Watch's website:

<http://www.seattleglobaljustice.org/agra-watch/>



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AGRA WATCH

Monitoring the Gates Foundation and AGRA,
Promoting Food Sovereignty and
Agricultural Sustainability in Africa



Photo from www.indymedia.ie

After 70 years of the Green Revolution,
we find ourselves in a global food crisis.

It's time for sustainability and democracy in agriculture.

AGRA Watch is a project of the Seattle-based Community Alliance for Global Justice. Our objectives are to share knowledge about the impacts of AGRA and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) in Africa, to challenge the dominant development ideology that they promote, and to facilitate the mutual exchange of information and experiences concerning sustainable and healthy agricultural policies and practices. AGRA Watch supports sustainable, socially responsible, and indigenous alternatives in Africa, and we work to connect global movements to those in our local community.

OUR ACTIVITIES



Accomplishments

- Wrote letters to publications such as Scientific American, The Economist, World Ark, and local newspapers
- Conducted successful workshop at 2008 CAGJ Teach-in
- Had our research featured in a major article in The Nation
- Offered short courses on AGRA and sustainable agriculture
- Supported research by university interns

Current Projects

- Offering film and discussion series
- Supporting and collaborating with organizations connected to African agriculture and African farmer networks
- Planning film and discussion series
- Conducting workshops to build more critical perception of the Gates Foundation and AGRA in our community
- Coordinating research internships

WHAT IS THE ALLIANCE FOR A GREEN REVOLUTION IN AFRICA (AGRA)?

The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is a multi-million dollar initiative of the Rockefeller and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundations, to increase production for major food crops through Western-style plant breeding and energy-intensive inputs. AGRA is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya and is chaired by Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations.



WHY DO AGRA & BMGF NEED WATCHING?

- They will push poor farmers out of agriculture by following market-driven development, privatizing seed, fueling indebtedness, and encouraging land consolidation. They disempower farmers by taking African agricultural innovation out of the fields and into laboratories.
- While condemning some of the Green Revolution's outcomes, they maintain Green Revolution ideologies and philosophies on hunger, farming, and the poor.

What was the Green Revolution?

An agricultural development project, funded by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, that used scientific plant breeding and chemical input packages to increase crop yields in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and India from the 1940s until the 1980s. A one-size-fits-all package of chemical inputs, improved seeds, irrigation, and machinery was intended to increase yields and fuel economic growth, thereby "containing" the "Red Revolution." However, the Green Revolution also increased farmer indebtedness, privileged wealthier farmers, degraded soils, depleted and polluted water sources, reduced biodiversity and traditional knowledge, and increased dependency on foreign inputs and aid. While many claim that the Green Revolution "bypassed" Africa, in reality it was attempted and failed to take hold because its institutions and approach were not compatible with the dynamics and diversity of African agriculture.

- They set up infrastructure and bend governmental will to open Africa to genetically engineered crops, despite field trial failures and findings by numerous studies that show GE is not as successful as claimed by industry.
- They promote an unsustainable techno-fix and fail to grasp the multidimensional nature of agriculture, hunger and development, and their rootedness in the highly unequal global political economy.
- They lack broad participation by African farmers and civil society, and are not accountable to governmental institutions. AGRA relies on the wealth and power of private philanthropies, whose decisions can sway the direction of agriculture and development according to priorities that come from the Global North.

"You come. You buy the land. You make a plan. You build a house. Now you ask me, what color do I want to paint the kitchen? This is not participation!"-Simon Mwamba of the Eastern and Southern Africa Small-Scale Farmers' Forum (in "Ending Africa's Hunger")

NOT ONLY AGRA . . .

AGRA is part of a system that reduces farmer self-determination and food sovereignty, and preserves Africa as a resource pool for the Global North.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

AGRA reflects the misguided agricultural development strategies of the Gates Foundation itself. In addition to making grants through AGRA, the Gates Foundation funds other problematic agricultural development programs in Africa, such as:

International Potato Center, 2009 - \$21,250,000 to develop high-yielding varieties of sweet potato
Michigan State University, 2009 - \$10,440,439 to train African regulators to use biotechnology effectively
International Food Policy Research Institute, 2008 - \$45,000,000 to breed higher levels of essential micronutrients into staple crops

Photo Credit: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

The Non-Profit Industrial Complex

AGRA and the Gates Foundation co-opt non-profit organizations and sustainable agriculture proponents by capitalizing on a desperate need for funding to provide services that governments are no longer able or allowed to provide.

Free Trade



Photo Credit: LIFE

AGRA operates alongside free trade and economic partnership agreements, and works with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), all of which promote export-led growth, cash crops, and foreign ownership/investment.

Land grabs - The New "Scramble for Africa"

Access to land and progressive land reform are key to food sovereignty and security. In contrast, land grabs by foreign powers increase industrial production of cash crops and threaten small farmers' livelihoods.

Marginalization of Pastoralists and Fisherfolk

Mainstream agricultural development, export-led growth, policy decisions and land grabs also have detrimental effects on the livelihoods and subsistence of pastoralists and fisherfolk across the African continent.



Photo from www.icp.ucl.ac.be