

Behind the Mask of Altruism: Imperialism, Monsanto and the Gates Foundation in Africa

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Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#)

Since 2006, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has funded the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) to the tune of almost \$420 million. Activists from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Ethiopia recently attended the US-Africa Food Sovereignty Strategy Summit in Seattle to argue that the Foundation's strategy for agriculture in Africa is a flawed attempt to impose industrial agriculture at the expense of more ecologically sound approaches.

Daniel Maingi works with small farmers in Kenya and belongs to the organization Growth Partners for Africa. The Seattle Times reported him as saying that while the goal of helping African farmers is laudable, the 'green revolution' approach is based on Western-style agriculture, with its reliance on fertilizer, weed killers and single crops, such as corn [1].

Maingi was born on a farm in eastern Kenya and studied agriculture from a young age. He remembers a time when his family would grow and eat a diversity of crops, such as mung beans, green grams, pigeon peas, and a variety of fruits now considered 'wild'.

Following the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s and 1990s and a green revolution meant to boost agricultural efficiency, the foods of his childhood have been replaced with maize, maize, and more maize.

The Seattle Globalist reported him as saying:

"In the morning, you make porridge from maize and send the kids to school. For lunch, boiled maize and a few green beans. In the evening, ugali, [a staple dough-like maize dish, served with meat]... [today] it's a monoculture diet, being driven by the food system - it's an injustice." [2]

As much of Africa is so dry, it's not suited for thirsty crops, and heavy use of fertilizer kills worms and microbes important for soil health. Maingi argued that the model of farming in the West is not appropriate for farming in most of Africa and that the West should invest in indigenous knowledge and agro-ecology.

Growth Partners Africa works with farmers to enrich the soil with manure and other organic material, to use less water and to grow a variety of crops, including some that would be considered weeds on an industrial farm. For Maingi, food sovereignty in Africa means reverting back to a way of farming and eating that pre-dates major investment from the West.

Mariam Mayet of the African Centre for Biosafety in South Africa says that many countries

are subsidizing farmers to buy fertilizer as part of the chemical-industrial model of agriculture, but that takes money away from public crop-breeding programmes that provide improved seeds to farmers at low cost.

Seattle times quoted her as saying:

“It’s a system designed to benefit agribusinesses and not small-scale farmers.”

She added that so many institutions, from African governments to the World Bank, have ‘embraced’ the ‘green revolution’ that alternative farming methods are getting short shrift.

Elizabeth Mpofu, of La Via Campesina, grows a variety of crops in Zimbabwe. During a recent drought, neighbours who relied on chemical fertilizer lost most of their crops. She reaped a bounty of sorghum, corn, and millet using what are called agro-ecological methods: natural pest control, organic fertilizer, and locally adapted crops.

Anna Goren of The Seattle Globalist reported that panelists at the Summit discussed the loss of traditional diets and ways of life and were also concerned about the increased reliance on expensive inputs and the dramatic drop in price of crops. This has resulted in poverty for the small farmer.

Goren quoted Daniel Maingi as saying:

“What the World Bank has done, the International Monetary fund, what AGRA and Bill Gates are doing, it’s actually pretty wrong. The farmer himself should not be starving”.

He added that what AGRA is doing is “out of sync with the natural process” by bringing in imported seeds, which are not adapted to the land and require excessive fertilizer and pesticides.

Maingi has every right to be concerned. While small farms produce most of the world’s food, recent reports show they face being displaced from their land and are experiencing unnecessary hardship [3,4].

AGRA is part of a global trend that is being driven by big agritech that seeks to eradicate the small farmer and undermine local economies and food sovereignty by subjecting countries to the vagaries of rigged global markets [5,6].

Giant agritech corporations like Monsanto with their patented seeds and associated chemical inputs are working to ensure a shift away from diversified agriculture that guarantees balanced local food production, the protection of people’s livelihoods and environmental sustainability.

Small farmers are being displaced and are struggling to preserve their indigenous seeds and traditional knowledge of farming systems. Agritech corporations are being allowed to shape government policy by being granted a strategic role in trade negotiations [7].

They are increasingly setting the policy/knowledge framework by being allowed to fund and determine the nature of research carried out in public universities and institutes [8]. They

continue to propagate the myth that they have the answer to global hunger and poverty, despite evidence that they do not [9,10].

The Gates Foundation, Monsanto and Western governments are placing African agriculture in the hands of big agritech for private profit and strategic control under the pretext of helping the poor [11].

Of course there is another major concern pertaining to the motives of the Gates Foundation and Monsanto in Africa and elsewhere; that of depopulation [12,13].

These two entities are not just linked together through their involvement in Agra. The Gates Foundation has substantial shares in Monsanto [14]. With Monsanto's active backing from the US State Department [15] and the Gates Foundation's links with USAID [16], together they comprise a formidable geopolitical strategic force.

Given that the Gates Foundation is about to be hauled through the Indian legal system for its vaccination programme in that country [17] and Monsanto has a decades' long track record of deception and criminality [18], it is important for everyone (not least the mainstream corporate media) to question why agriculture is being handed over to such entities.

“... take capitalism and business out of farming in Africa. The West should invest in indigenous knowledge and agro-ecology, education and infrastructure and stand in solidarity with the food sovereignty movement.” Daniel Maingi, Growth Partners for Africa.

Notes/Links

- 1] http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2024758081_gatescriticsxml.html
- 2] <http://www.seattleglobalist.com/2014/10/14/gates-agriculture-farming-revolution-africa/29493>
- 3] <http://www.grain.org/article/entries/4929-hungry-for-land-small-farmers-feed-the-world-with-less-than-a-quarter-of-all-farmland>
- 4] http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/OI_Report_Down_on_the_Farm.pdf
- 5] <http://www.bhoomimagazine.org/article/cash-food-will-strike-very-foundation-economy>
- 6] <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/flood-cn.htm>
- 7] <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/walmart-and-monsanto-on-indous-agriculture-initiative-board/article3176462.ece>
- 8] <http://dissidentvoice.org/2009/07/monsanto-a-contemporary-east-india-company-and-corporate-knowledge-in-india/>
- 9] <http://www.cban.ca/Resources/Topics/Feeding-the-World>
- 10] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/india-genetically-modified-seeds-agricultural-productivity-and-political-fraud/5328227>
- 11] <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/jun/07/-g8-new-alliance-flawed-project>
- 12] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/genetic-engineering-eugenics-and-the-ideology-of-the-rich-5329025>
- 13] http://www.naturalnews.com/029911_vaccines_Bill_Gates.html
- 14] http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2012751169_gatesmonsanto29m.html
- 15] <http://www.commondreams.org/news/2013/05/14/revealed-how-us-state-department-twists--arms-monsantos-behalf>
- 16] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/weaponization-of-the-food-system-genetically-engineered-->

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17] <http://healthimpactnews.com/2014/bill-melinda-gates-foundation-vaccine-empire-on-trial-in-india/>

18] <http://www.wakingtimes.com/2014/06/20/complete-history-monsanto-worlds-evil-corporation/>

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