

1. Side event on 'African responses to the Gates Foundation's Green Revolution in Africa'
2. Ending Africa's Hunger Means Listening to Farmers

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

IIED Press Release:

<http://www.iied.org/natural-resources/media/world-food-day-marked-call-democratise-agricultural-research-and-ensure-food>

New Website:

<http://www.excludedvoices.org/democratising-agricultural-research-food-sovereignty-west-africa>

Download Multimedia publication: <http://www.iied.org/pubs/display.php?o=14603IIED>  
(Webpage from which to download 10.6Mb PDF)

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**1. Side event on 'African responses to the Gates Foundation's Green Revolution in Africa'**

A report from an interesting side event held in the margins of MOP 5

By Negotiation Tracker

Undercover COP: Dispatches from the Convention on Biological Diversity negotiations

Published: October 14, 2010

<http://undercovercop.org/2010/10/14/side-event-on-african-responses-to-the-gates-foundations-green-revolution-in-africa/#more-280>

On October 12, 2010, representatives from the Seattle based group 'AGRA Watch' joined colleagues from South Africa and Kenya to critique the actions of the Gates foundation and its Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) colluding with industry to promote GMOs and pressure African countries to legalize them. Professor Phil Bereano moderated the event.

Nearly 40 people heard panelists Daniel Maingi of Kenyan Biodiversity Coalition, Mariam Mayet of the African Centre for Biosafety, and Travis English of AGRA Watch. Attendees included many of the representatives implicated from the Kenyan Government, AGRA, ISAAA, CropLife International, WEMA, US State Department, and several others with close ties to industry.

Travis English began by first providing evidence showing that there is no reason to believe AGRA is actually an African led organization. He illustrated the funding patterns of the Foundation/AGRA and their strong connections to Monsanto directly and through their grantees.

Daniel Maingi presented the maize import scandal of last summer when South Africa followed its laws as well as the Cartagena Protocol providing notification off the export but Kenya did not notify, do a risk assessment or issue an Advance Informed Agreement. Indeed, many GMOs appear to have been brought into Kenya, without approval.

Mariam Mayet highlighted three projects illustrating the problems caused by the Gates

Foundation's involvement in African agriculture. Firstly, WEMA, "Water Efficient Maize for Africa" is supported with \$47 million from the Gates Foundation, taking place in several countries. While the mantra used to be concern for the starving Africans, it now appears to be droughts and climate change. However, other scientists say that the large number of genes involved means 10-20 years will be needed for any development of drought tolerant maize.

Secondly, GE Sorghum which is also funded by money from the Gates foundation is supposed to have increased Vitamin A levels etc. The application for contained use has been thrown out twice by the pro-GE South African government. Industry institutions have been involved in this project but no farmers.

And thirdly, the Gates Foundation is also involved in non-GE work that presents problems. "Increasing the value-chain" is the slogan with which soy crop production is promoted in Mozambique. However this directly undercuts the business of small farmers in South Africa who sell soy to Mozambique in conjunction with Cargill.

Discussion was very lively with industry and government advisors alleging that we had distorted facts, and were callous towards poverty and hunger. An Ethiopian delegate pointed out that other approaches should also be receiving support, and Prof Jack Heinemann of New Zealand, a participant in writing the ISTAAD report, noted that process was the largest review of ag for the developing world and found little role for GE.

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## **2. Ending Africa's Hunger Means Listening to Farmers**

By Stephen Leahy

IPS News, October 16, 2010

<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=53186>

NAGOYA, Japan, Oct 16, 2010 (IPS) - Africa is hungry - 240 million people are undernourished. Now, for the first-time, small African farmers have been properly consulted on how to solve the problem of feeding sub-Saharan Africa. Their answers appear to directly repudiate a massive international effort to launch an African Green Revolution funded in large part by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Instead of new hybrid seeds, chemical fertilisers and pesticides, family farmers in West Africa said they want to use local seeds, avoid spending precious cash on chemicals and most importantly to direct public agricultural research to meet their needs, according to a multi-media publication released on World Food Day (Oct. 16).

"There is a clear vision from these small farmers. They are rejecting the approach of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa," said report co-author Michel Pimbert of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), a non-profit research institute based in London.

"These were true farmer-led assessment where small farmers and other food producers listened and questioned agricultural and other experts and then came up with their own

recommendations," Pimbert told IPS.

"Food and agriculture policy and research tend to ignore the values, needs, knowledge and concerns of the very people who provide the food we all eat — and often serve instead powerful commercial interests such as multinational seed and food retailing companies," he said.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, backs the need for a fundamental shift in food and agricultural research to make it more democratic and accountable to society.

"I applaud the efforts described here to organise citizen's juries and farmers' assessments of agricultural research in West Africa," writes De Schutter in a forward to the IIED publication titled "Democratising Agricultural Research for Food Sovereignty in West Africa".

The publication includes video clips and audio files that feature the voices and concerns of food producers from across the region.

About half a billion Africans depend on small-scale farming of less than two hectares. Most of the smallholder farmers are women. There is serious concern about the direction of Africa's public agriculture research, which is mainly funded by donor countries. Funders exert control over what type of research they fund and that almost always reflects a northern science and technology bias favouring new hybrid seeds that must be purchased every year and chemical fertilisers, said Pimbert.

To find out what smallholder farmers want African public agricultural research to do for them, independent farmer-led assessment of the current agricultural research was done in Mali. Those findings fed into two citizen/farmer juries comprised of 40 to 50 ordinary farmers and other food producers. Each jury addressed specific issues such as what kind of agricultural research smallholders want and how food and agricultural research can be more democratic.

The jurors listened to and questioned a wide range of expert witnesses from Africa and Europe. They considered the evidence presented in light of their experiences and agreed on a series of recommendations for their respective governments. Those included direct farmer involvement in setting the public research agenda and strategic priorities, research into traditional varieties and ecological farming, and the idea that such research should be funded by their own governments not outsiders as is the case presently in West Africa.

It's a fully open and participatory process, said Pimbert, who has been involved in similar processes in India and South America. Jurors are carefully selected to reflect a broad range of localities, variety of knowledge and gender. An independent oversight panel with representatives from a number of countries such as Senegal, Burkina Faso, Niger and Benin acts like election observers to make sure the entire process is fair and open.

"This has never happened in West Africa before. For that matter, ordinary farmers in Canada or the U.S. have never been asked what they want public ag research to do for them," he said.

Farmers and "ordinary" citizens directly deciding what kind of agricultural research they want is vital for achieving food security, local livelihoods and human well being, and resilience to climate change, Pimbert said.

Following the food crisis in 2008 there is a major push for a "new green revolution" in Africa, championed by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) a \$400 million effort headed by Kofi Annan, former secretary- general of the United Nations and funded by the Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. AGRA aims to double or quadruple the yields of smallholder farms.

"We're are choosing to invest in what we believe will work," said Sylvia Mathews Burwell, a member of the AGRA board and president of the Global Development Program, which is one of three focus areas for the Gates Foundation.

AGRA is putting its funding in the development of new seed varieties such as drought-tolerant maize, improving soil fertility and market access and farmer education. They are not presently funding genetically engineered crops.

"Farmers want ag research that will help them feed their families and have extra to sell in the market," Burwell said in an interview. "Our consultants have been out there talking to farmers. We're attempting to include the voice of farmer."

For many, the AGRA approach is a downscaled version of U.S. and European agricultural production, with its central focus on boosting yields with hybrid seeds and fertiliser.

AGRA's objective seems to be to make "farmers dependent on inputs, dependent on markets, instead of the farmers being in charge," said Hans Herren, president of the Millennium Institute in Virginia. Herren was the World Food Prize winner in 1995, and is credited with implementing a biological control programme that saved the African cassava crop, averting a food crisis.

"We have seen from the example in the U.S. and EU where this dependency leads... fewer farmers, lower prices for farmers... more jobless people," said Herren, who was co chair of International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD).

The three-year IAASTD concluded the best hope for the feeding the world was with agro-ecosystems that married food production with ensuring water supplies remain clean, preserving biodiversity, and improving the livelihoods of the poor. The transformation that African agriculture needs is not more large-scale industrial farm production relying on outside inputs of fertiliser but with small farmers practising a multifunctional agro-ecosystem approach, Herren said.

"Smallholders and their authentic organisations (co-ops, small rural technical schools, and the like) have shown that strengthened agro-ecological approaches can produce adequately," said Philip Bereano of the University of Washington in Seattle.

AGRA has failed to "consult with smallholders, listen to their advice, and follow their

suggestions," said Bereano in an email from Nagoya, Japan. Bereano is involved with a citizen's group called AGRA Watch, which says major funders from the North are pushing an industrial agri-business development model on Africa.

Agribusiness is setting itself up as the solution to the "food problem" and many governments are listening because the 2008 food crisis shocked them, said Pimbert. "Africa has enormous quantities of land and resources... and now there is a stampede to lock those up."

AGRA, many scientists and large NGOs believe the business approach of high-technology and public-private partnerships is the way to feed Africa, they can't accept the smallholders' worldview, he said. What will happen instead is that smallholders will buy the new hybrid seed, fertiliser and pesticide on credit, eventually be forced off their land to repay their debts and end up in the cities, while large corporate style farms will consolidate smallholder land.

"This is what happened to many of India's smallholders," Pimbert said.