

# Avaaz's Global 'Ebay of Seeds'

admin

Jul 18, 2014 [Avaaz](#)

WKOG editor: Note that Tom Periello, [c0-founder of Avaaz](#), served one term as a U.S. Representative for Virginia's 5th congressional district, serving from 2009 until 2011. He is a member of the Democratic Party. Currently, he serves as President and CEO of the [Center for American Progress Action Fund](#). In 2013, U.S. president Barack Obama (Democrat) signed the 'Monsanto Protection Act' written by Monsanto-sponsored senator. More recently, it has been announced that Michelle Obama will be "[teaming up with Monsanto to promote children's food](#)". Further, MoveOn.org, an NGO serving as a front group for the U.S. democrats, is also a founder of Avaaz. ["In 2006 MoveOn combined its membership list with that of [Res Publica \(New York City\)](#) to launch [Avaaz.org](#)."] [Further reading: <http://wrongkindofgreen.org/2013/09/18/avaaz-imperialist-pimps-of-militarism-protectors-of-the-oligarchy-trusted-facilitators-of-war-part-ii-section-iii>]

[The Ecologist](#)

July 16, 2014

by Julian Rose

**Already 56,000 people have pledged to support a global 'internet seed swap' initiative promoted by Avaaz, writes Julian Rose. Trouble is, the plans are deeply flawed, and have been developed without consultation with major seed saving groups worldwide.**

*We never asked Avaaz for anything and have never heard about an organization of small farmers in the world that could conceive of such a project.*

What happens when a major internet campaigning organisation gets it 100% wrong?

Answer: tens of thousands of people end up pledging donations for something that can't be put into effect – and the NGO's motives are called into question.

Such is the position of Avaaz at this time.

In a controversial communication to its supporters the internet campaigns group, on behalf of the Center for Food Safety (CFS, a non profit US public interest and environmental advocacy organization) [calls for support](#) for an international 'eBay' style portal that will circulate seeds to wherever they are needed, as a counteraction to monopolization of the seeds market by the Monsanto corporation.

Already over 56,000 people have donated or pledged to do so.

## **A Noah's Ark to sink Monsanto?**

Under the title "[Let's build a Noah's Ark to stop Monsanto](#)" Avaaz claims to have been asked by farmers to back their desire to establish this "*first ever, non-profit 'eBay' of seed*" as an online marketplace where "*any farmer, anywhere can source a wide variety of plants cheaper than the genetically modified seeds from chemical companies.*"

*"This global online store could re-flood the market with with all kinds of seeds and slowly break the monopoly that*

*is putting our food future at risk.”*

They also make the claim that this would be a “legal” way of getting around current prohibitive seed laws.

At first glance this all sounds pretty worthy. It is critically important that farmers have the ability to save their seeds. Corporate lobbying has caused national governments, the EU, US and other global trading blocks – to severely restrict the free flow of seeds – increasingly outlawing ‘non registered’ seeds completely.

The Avaaz statement concurs on these dangers, but then comes up with an unworkable and downright dangerous way of getting around them.

### **Misusing the name of Vandana Shiva**

CFS also claimed, on the Avaaz page, that renowned seed / farmer activist Vandana Shiva backed their scheme. Upon getting notice of this [Vandana replied](#):

*“Dear Friends, Dear Seed Savers and Defenders of Seed Freedom, It has just come to my notice that Avaaz has launched a campaign for fundraising for an ‘ebay of seeds’ and my name has been used in their petition without my permission or consultation.*

*“This is unethical. I do not endorse it. I also do not support the concept even if my name had not been used. We have all with love and solidarity built a strong movement for saving seeds and farmers’ rights on the ground and in our communities.*

*“Let us continue our work with full integrity and mutual trust. love Vandana.”*

The offending claim has [now been withdrawn](#) and [an apology has been offered](#) by CFS, which attributes the problem to a “miscommunication of CFS’s international staff with Dr. Vandana Shiva”. Still, this is, by any account, a remarkable error – particularly by an NGO supposedly coming to the rescue of small farmers.

### **French seed network issues warning**

The respected independent farmer’s seed network [Reseau Semences Paysanne](#) (which represents 70 seed saving groups across France) has issued an alert on Avaaz’s announcement entitled [“Is Avaaz combatting Monsanto or facilitating biopiracy?”](#) They ask:

*“Do farmers need a global online store for seeds? Is this commerce with seeds over the internet going to escape the laws of world trade dictated by Monsanto and other multinationals? Isn’t what Avaaz proposes running the risk of organizing biopiracy on a global scale serving these multinationals?”*

*“We never asked Avaaz for anything and have never heard about an organization of small farmers in the world that could conceive of such a project.*

*“Small farmers practising agro-ecology need first of all to be able to select and multiply their seeds locally, in order to suit their local growing conditions and adapt to climate changes as they occur in the fields.*

*“They don’t need seeds selected and multiplied on the other side of the planet that would require large amounts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides to adapt to local growing conditions, to which they not acclimatised ...*

*“Farmers are happy when NGOs help them to organize themselves. But they do not need NGOs trying to mobilize civil society in their name for purposes that are not theirs.”*

### **Let’s support the genuine seed savers!**

I would add, that from my own perspective as an organic farmer and President of the International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside, nothing in the Avaaz proposal looks remotely workable.

- For a start, the majority of farmers who might benefit from access to new seeds don’t have access to the internet – let alone electricity.

- Then what kind of quality would such seeds be? Certified organic? Or just any seeds from farms that have a surplus to [home](#) requirement?
- How could the origin of such seeds be known – and trusted?
- There is also a very real danger that GM proponents and mischief-makers could drop GM seeds into a storage depot and they would instantly be spread around the world.

The entire project looks logistically unstable and would be highly likely to end up causing more problems than it intends to solve.

This deeply flawed initiative should be abandoned – or reworked to support genuine *bona fide* local and regional seed organisations that have spent years diligently gathering, sorting, multiplying and swapping their seeds for the benefit of small and medium sized farmers in appropriate bio-regions all over the world.

Such seed organisations work against great odds in ensuring food security and food sovereignty for us all. They are outstanding examples of non profit organisations fully deserving public support.

### **Power without accountability**

As with many 'big ideas' the Avaaz proposal might look nice at first glance, but in reality it would undermine farmer's tried and tested methods of seed saving by offering them an insecure, unrealistic and unworkable 'easy option'.

All of which raises the question: is Avaaz quietly operating within a world of ulterior political motives and tainted corporate interests? Is it hoping to play on the public's ignorance of what actually goes on in the food and farming sector and thus become a vector of misinformation and weighted political propaganda?

It's impossible not to question the motivations of an NGO capable of so misleading its supporters – for example, by fictitiously claiming Vandana Shiva's support. I suggest people do their own research.

Meanwhile many have already lost trust in Avaaz based on inconsistencies in previous campaigns and on an often cited inability to respond to criticism and accept feedback. That tells a story in its own right.

*[Julian Rose is an early pioneer of UK organic farming, international activist and author. He is currently the President of The International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside. His most recent book 'In Defence of Life - A Radical Reworking of Green wisdom' is published by Earth Books. Julian's website is [www.julianrose.info](http://www.julianrose.info).]*

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