

African farmers fight against Gates Foundation's attempts to implement ecologically destructive industrial agriculture

(NaturalNews) One of Africa's biggest struggles in regard to farming is the soil's lack of nutrients, a factor that's exacerbated famine across the continent. Together, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation shared a particular interest in "reducing poverty and hunger in Africa" through a program called the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA).

Launched in 2006, the \$180 million five-year program sought to provide African farmers with Western-style agricultural techniques, including reliance on fertilizer and weedkillers and planting single crops, such as corn.

AGRA concentrated efforts on setting up 9,000 dealers within 5 kilometers of farmers to sell them agricultural supplies, primarily chemical fertilizers, [reports NewScientist](#). Nearly 3,000 inspectors were appointed under the initiative to monitor soil health and advise farmers on how much fertilizer to use.

While some African farmers say their yields have doubled under AGRA, others beg to differ.

African farm activists say Gates Foundation's Western-style agricultural practices are further depleting soil nutrients and killing beneficial microbes with chemical fertilizers

Activists who work with small farmers in Kenya, such as Daniel Maingi, say the "Green Revolution" is a "flawed attempt to impose industrial agriculture at the expense of more ecologically sound approaches to farming," according to a [report](#) by the *Seattle Times*.

Maingi and other activists from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Ethiopia brought their concerns to a Town Hall event in Seattle on October 12 in hopes of connecting with high-up orchestrators of AGRA.

"At least we tried," Maingi said, who was met with disappointment upon learning that the high-up people he hoped to meet with would not be present at the event.

"It's important that these voices be heard," said Heather Day, an organizer of [The Global Struggle For Food Sovereignty](#), a five-day summit between African and American organizations attempting to change some of the Gates Foundation's methods.

American-style agricultural methods are unsuccessful in Africa because of geological differences between the two continents. Africa's soil is dry and not well-suited for thirsty crops or the heavy use of chemical fertilizers, [farm activists](#) say. Heavy fertilizer use kills beneficial worms and microbes in the soil that are crucial for soil health.

"The model of farming in the West is not appropriate for farming in most of Africa," said Maingi, who founded [Growth Partners Africa](#), an organization aimed at promoting sustainable development for small-scale farmers in Kenya.

Growth Partners Africa helps farmers learn to use sustainable farming techniques such as enriching the soil with manure and other organic material, using less water and growing a variety of crops, "including some that would be considered weeds on an industrial farm."

Under programs like AGRA, the use of chemical fertilizers have become widespread in [Africa](#); however, many farmers aren't experiencing increased crop yields but instead losing money because of high fertilizer prices.

Government subsidies are pushing many farmers to adopt hybrid maize seeds and synthesized fertilizer with the promise of massive yields. However, adopting these genetically modified (GM) seeds decreases diversity and resilience of local seed varieties, according to a [report](#) by the African Centre for Biosafety (ACB) in South Africa.

"It's a system designed to benefit agribusinesses and not small-scale farmers," said Mariam Mayet with ACB, adding that government subsidies for Western-style agriculture takes away money from public crop-breeding programs offering improved seeds at low costs to farmers.

Chris Williams, the [Gates Foundation](#) press secretary, said in an email that the organization does focus on native traditional crops like cassava, sorghum and millet. "Our goal is to give them a range of options," wrote Williams.

But because so many organizations have embraced the "Green Revolution," alternative farming methods are getting pushed aside, Mayet countered.

Sources:

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