

Community Alliance for Global Justice

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From Seattle to Cancun: International Coalition Calls on Gates Foundation for Real Solutions to Hunger and Climate Change

Seattle, WA – Today as thousands march in Cancun for climate justice, Seattle-based [AGRA Watch](#) and [La Via Campesina North America](#) are joined by 60 organizations and 40 academics and scientists from around the world who call on the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to support real solutions to climate change, hunger and poverty.

In a [letter](#) to the Foundation, the signatories state their concern that the Foundation and its private sector partners are pushing to industrialize agriculture and commercialize genetically engineered crops in Africa at the expense of small farmers and the environment. Over one thousand individuals from more than 30 countries and 48 states in the US to date have also signed a separate online [petition](#) in support of the letter.

The letter to the Foundation condemns the industrial approach to agriculture and high-tech 'fixes' like genetic engineering because they undermine sustainable, resilient food systems that are controlled by local populations. Local systems actually mitigate climate change while the spread of industrial agriculture is one of the heaviest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions and loss of plant biodiversity worldwide, thus directly fueling the climate crisis.

AGRA Watch and La Via Campesina North America are sending the letter to the Gates Foundation as thousands of peasant farmers, rural women and men, indigenous peoples, and activists from all sectors of society mobilize in Cancun to reject corporate-driven, market-based solutions to climate change being promoted at the UN climate negotiations. "Both the UN climate negotiators and the Gates Foundation must recognize that false solutions such as GMOs and agrofuels that threaten our biodiversity will further Africa's exploitation, not salvation. We need to see real solutions to reduce climate emissions instead of more pressure on Africa," explained Anne Maina of the [African Biodiversity Network](#), currently present at the talks.

Signatories of the letter and social movements in Cancun assert that real solutions to hunger and climate change are rooted in food sovereignty, the right of peoples and communities to define and control their own food and agriculture systems. [La Via Campesina](#) affirms that, "We need millions of peasant communities and indigenous

territories to feed humanity and cool the planet" and "thousands of peoples' solutions." Echoing this statement, the sign-on letter calls on the Foundation to redefine its funding priorities in favor of small-scale agroecological agriculture, citing the findings of the 2008 International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) [report](#). The letter further advocates for an authentically participatory process that involves African farmers, farmer organizations, and civil society in decision-making from beginning to end, and urges the Foundation to restructure its grant-making to ensure transparency and accountability to farmers.

The signatories of the letter represent a broad coalition encompassing farmers, farmworkers, farmer organizations, food industry workers, faith-based organizations, environmental groups, public health and consumer groups, urban agriculture groups, labor rights organizations, policy and advocacy groups, charitable foundations, grant-makers, anti-hunger and anti-poverty campaigns, peace and human rights organizations, and proponents of biosafety, biodiversity, sustainable development, fair trade, agroecological agriculture, social and economic justice, and land and water rights. "These organizations represent a mere fraction of the diverse international movements working to transform a broken food and world economic system from the bottom-up," stated Dena Hoff, Coordinator of La Via Campesina North America. Janae Choquette of AGRA Watch continued, "The Gates Foundation, like the leaders of the talks in Cancun, is out of sync with those who offer real solutions to the world's most pressing problems, namely the peoples most affected by them."

AGRA Watch, a program of Seattle-based Community Alliance for Global Justice, supports African initiatives and programs that foster farmers' self-determination and food sovereignty. AGRA Watch also supports public engagement in fighting genetic engineering and exploitative agricultural policies, and demands transparency and accountability on the part of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and AGRA, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa.

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