



ETC Group
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Food Sovereignty or Green Revolution 2.0? *This time the "silver bullet" has a gun*

ETC Group today releases a 16-page review of five new initiatives intended to launch what ETC dubs "Green Revolution 2.0" in Africa. Leading the charge is a plan to construct four Centers of Excellence together with a second initiative called the *Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa* (AGRA), funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. "The Green Revolution that followed World War II focused on semi-dwarf, high-yielding plant varieties" says Pat Mooney, ETC Group's Executive Director. "It was a one-size-fits-all, take-it-or-leave-it silver bullet," Mooney adds, "Africa left it." In other words, Green Revolution technologies were inappropriate for the needs and resources of African farmers. ETC Group's communiqué warns that, in Green Revolution 2.0, "big-box" science is being buttressed by a strategy to restructure African agriculture. Although the cornerstone of the new revolution will still be high-tech seeds, the G-8 and private foundations also want continental changes in market structure, intellectual property laws, and seed regulation so that agribusiness suppliers can profitably sell seeds, chemicals, and other inputs to farmers. "Big-box science will be linked to small box suppliers," Mooney argues, "This time, the silver bullet has a gun."

While a comprehensive approach to African agriculture seems logical, ETC Group is concerned that all of the major initiatives are "top-down" exports from OECD countries. Nobody is talking to farmers or their organizations. The Canadian government, for example, is building a \$30 million biotech research facility in Nairobi to pursue genetically modified crops. The request came from an international research network headquartered in Washington – not from Africans. Likewise, the Gates/Rockefeller AGRA initiative already has a detailed plan on how to spend its first \$150 million but admits that it has yet to talk with African farmers' organizations. AGRA is currently cobbling together an "African" NGO. "AGRA has allocated \$10 million to give to farmers' organizations," says Hope Shand, ETC Group's Research Director, "but it hasn't talked to them yet."

ETC Group acknowledges that money is needed and that agricultural science has a role to play. However, the new communiqué agrees with the conclusions of a global Food Sovereignty conference held in Mali in February that identifies the main barrier to food and farmers in Africa as the WTO and other repressive trade agreements and multinational agribusiness. "If the G-8, Gates, and Rockefeller would get rid of some of these barriers – most of them created by OECD countries – African farmers could do most of the rest," Shand suggests.

The five initiatives discussed in the communiqué are the G8's new Centers of Excellence; the Syngenta Foundation's joint biotech ventures in Africa; Jeffrey Sachs's Millennium Villages programme; Google.org's new interests on the continent; and AGRA (the Gates and Rockefeller commitment). ETC Group's communiqué describes where the money is likely to wind up - and who is likely to benefit.

“Only farmer-led agricultural and rural development initiatives that build upon existing, working systems can lead to real improvement,” ETC Group's Silvia Riberio insists. “Money and resources – and appropriate technologies – are needed, but science is not an antidote to bad policies.”

The communiqué concludes that, “Agriculture and biodiversity are hot items at the World Bank, FAO and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and major meetings on these topics will be held over the next 14 months. These intergovernmental bodies must recognize that small farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk must be the principal architects and actors in strengthening Africa's food sovereignty.”

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ETC Group, formerly RAFI, is an international civil society organization headquartered in Canada. The ETC Group is dedicated to the advancement of cultural and ecological diversity and human rights. www.etcgroup.org. The ETC Group is also a member of the Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation Programme (CBDC). The CBDC is a collaborative experimental initiative involving civil society organizations and public research institutions in 14 countries. The CBDC is dedicated to the exploration of community-directed programmes to strengthen the conservation and enhancement of agricultural biodiversity. The CBDC website is www.cbdcprogram.org