



SOUTHERN AFRICAN FAITH COMMUNITIES' ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE

Harmful Impacts of AGRA in Its 13 Focus Countries: Key issues of Industrial Farming (AGRA and the Gates Foundation)

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Introduction

- Industrial Agriculture in Africa was designed during colonialism to feed the European industries. It was a source of raw materials. It was never meant to benefit the local people.
- In post-colonial Africa, food is treated as a commodity, with multinational companies investing and making profit.



“Africa’s colonial encounter with Europe was the most disruptive in African development history. This chapter exposes the motivations for Europe’s colonisation of Africa, the methods used, and the implications of this encounter for the agriculture sector and Africa’s prospects of recovery and industrialisation. The aim is to highlight how Africa’s colonial past did not only alter the continent’s development trajectory but also to show how the same disrupted past can be revived as the basis for contemporary effort towards development.

Based on secondary and archival sources obtained in both grey and academic literature, this chapter shows that land expropriation by Europeans not only disrupted livelihoods but also shattered prospects for autonomous development and industrialisation. Colonialism wrenched the means of production from Africans and turned them into cheap labour providers to serve Europeans. The chapter concludes that understanding Africa’s development and industrialisation challenges in the post-independence period is vital first to understanding the continent’s history.”

- *Emmanuel Ndhlovu, Adebajo, A. (2010). The curse of Berlin: Africa after the Cold War. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.*

Who is AGRA?

- Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is an initiative founded in 2006 through a partnership between the Rockefeller Foundation and the Gates Foundation.
- AGRA has its headquarters in Nairobi Kenya and has offices in 11 countries.
- AGRA has program areas for improved agricultural seed; soil health and fertility; improved agricultural markets; strengthened agricultural policies and partnerships; innovative financing; and support for farmers organizations.

Formation of the African Green Revolution

“The original Green Revolution was a huge success in many parts of the world,” said **Judith Rodin, president of the Rockefeller Foundation.**

“Unfortunately, in Africa, while there are many positive efforts, momentum is going the other way. Over the past 15 years, the number of Africans living on less than a dollar a day has increased by 50 percent. Working with the Gates Foundation and with African leaders, farmers and scientists, we’re committed to launching an African Green Revolution that will help tens of millions of people who are living on the brink of starvation in sub-Saharan Africa.”

1. Rising Hunger and Food Insecurity

Despite AGRA's mandate to reduce hunger, the number of severely hungry people in its 13 focus countries grew by 31% during its first 15 years, rising from approximately 108 million in 2006 to around 141 million by 2020.

In February 28, 2022, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) released an evaluation of its recently concluded five-year strategy. The media outlet Devex, which covers international development issues, reported on the evaluation under the headline, "AGRA has failed to improve Africa's food security, report finds."

While noting the range of "mixed results" reported in the evaluation, the article highlighted the key finding of importance to all who want to understand the impacts of this billion-dollar initiative on Africa's small-scale farmers: "AGRA did not meet its headline goal of increased incomes and food security for 9 million smallholders."

2. Limited Productivity and Income Gains

Yield growth for staple crops in AGRA countries remained only marginally higher than pre-AGRA trends. There is no clear evidence that farmers' incomes rose significantly from the modest yield increases and marketable surpluses AGRA achieved.

3. Farmer Indebtedness

Smallholders often took on debt to purchase the hybrid seeds, synthetic fertilizers, and agrochemicals AGRA promoted. This has saddled many with loans they cannot repay, trapping them in cycles of poverty and dependency.

4. Environmental Degradation

AGRA's high-input model (of chemical inputs) has led to soil degradation, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity as chemical fertilizers and pesticides become more widely used, undermining long-term ecosystem health and resilience.

5. Public Health Risks

Rising agrochemical use has been linked to increased health problems among farming communities, including respiratory issues and skin conditions, and NCDs due to inadequate safety training and protective equipment.

6. Erosion of Seed Sovereignty and Cultural Practices

The widespread adoption of commercial, often patented, seed varieties has displaced farmers' traditional landraces.

This undermines local seed systems, erodes agrobiodiversity, and weakens cultural food practices passed down through generations.

7. Policy Capture and Undermining Agroecology

AGRA has leveraged its funding and consultant networks to shape national and continental agricultural policies—often sidelining farmer-led agroecological approaches.

In Kenya's Vihiga County, for example, an AGRA-linked coalition infiltrated a two-year agroecology policy process at its final drafting stage, inserting terms like “climate-smart agriculture” to favor industrial models over grassroots food-sovereignty initiatives.

At the continental level, AGRA's funding of key African Union gatherings has similarly skewed the Post-Malabo agricultural agenda toward high-input schemes, marginalizing smallholder voices and democratic decision-making.

Conclusion

- Smallholder farmers in Africa seek to feed their families and sell any extra food
- Food production is a source of livelihood and therefore must be resilient and have localised solution
- Smallholder farmers have the capacity to feed themselves and also look after their environment in a sustainable manner.
- As people of faith guided by the sacred texts and divine instructions we know that food is live and hence we also support the campaign that **#My food is African**
- Being depended on hybrid and GM seeds puts farmer into a difficult situation should the supply have logistical challenges

References

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