

U.S. WORKING GROUP ON THE FOOD CRISIS CRITICIZES GLOBAL HARVEST INITIATIVE'S FAILED IDEAS TO FEED THE WORLD

Cites Landmark IAASTD Report Endorsing Agroecological Solutions to Address Hunger

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Washington D.C. (September 22, 2009) – The U.S. Working Group on the Food Crisis criticized the new Global Harvest Initiative, backed by Monsanto, Archer Daniels Midland, John Deere and DuPont, for continuing to advocate a failed approach to feeding the world and addressing global hunger. The September 22 Global Harvest Initiative Symposium on “Agriculture at a Crossroads”—featuring Senator Richard Lugar—claimed to have some of the “best thinkers” in agriculture, food security and hunger. However, it relied heavily on panelists who have consistently pushed chemical-intensive production; unproven biotechnologies that have been linked to farmers’ loss of land, suicides and environmental contamination; and “free trade” in agriculture as the solutions to feeding the world.

The U.S. Working Group on the Food Crisis expressed deep disappointment that the Symposium is rehashing failed solutions from the past, and missing an opportunity to focus on key findings from the landmark UN-sponsored International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). Also titled “Agriculture At a Crossroads,” the IAASTD points towards a very different set of solutions to world hunger than that espoused by the Global Harvest Initiative. The IAASTD emphasizes the importance of investing in agroecological sciences and biodiverse farming and establishing new rules to break up corporate monopolies of the food system. It warns that chemical-intensive production continues to have adverse health and environmental effects, while “modern biotechnology” (genetically engineered seed) has mostly benefited transnational corporations and the wealthy, rather than the poor and hungry of the world.

Dr. Molly Anderson, a coordinating lead author of the North America/Europe sub-Global Assessment, said, “The IAASTD report clearly says that business as usual in agriculture is not an option. The IAASTD is the most authoritative and broad-based resource available on the full impacts of past investment in agricultural development and future options. It shows that dominant agricultural practices are endangering the planet and that increasing yields alone will not reduce the hunger of millions or improve the well-being of small-scale landholders, landless people and women farmers who make up the majority of the world’s poorest people. It is disappointing that the Global Harvest Initiative has so far failed to take into account these

findings. We urge U.S. policymakers to look instead to the IAASTD report for the best solutions to address food security.”

Dr. Marcia Ishii-Eiteman, senior scientist at Pesticide Action Network and a co-author on the IAASTD Global report, said, “The continuing global food crisis demands immediate action. Ironically, it is large agribusiness corporations such as those sponsoring the Global Harvest Initiative that have helped create today's hunger, environmental and climate crises—by bringing us corporate-controlled, water- and energy-intensive industrial agriculture that is responsible for massive greenhouse gas emissions. Fortunately, the IAASTD shows us a better way: support the world’s small-scale farmers and cool the planet through productive, energy-efficient, ecologically-resilient, locally adapted farming methods. Guarantee the poor’s access to and control of the resources they need to grow and sell their own food. Revitalize local food economies. And restore fairness and democratic control over our food systems.”

Ben Burkett, president of the National Family Farm Coalition and a Mississippi farmer, noted the lack of farmers’ voices at the Symposium and called for a new agriculture policy that recognizes the input of small-scale family farmers. Burkett said, “The main agribusiness funders of the Global Harvest Initiative control much of the inputs farmers depend upon to produce food. Increasing corporate control of our seed and fertilizer industries and the push for free trade have seriously harmed the livelihoods of U.S. farmers while also undermining real sustainable local food initiatives. Farmers can no longer save their own seeds nor afford the expensive genetically modified seeds pushed on them. The IAASTD recognized the central role of small-scale farmers and how our knowledge needs to be heard in these debates.”

The US Working Group on the Food Crisis (<http://usfoodcrisisgroup.org/>) comprises religious, anti-hunger, family farm and farmworker, food justice, environmental, labor, consumer and international development groups. The U.S. Working Group on the Food Crisis calls on governments, civil society and the private sector to:

- Rebalance power in the food system and strengthen anti-trust enforcement in agribusiness.
- Direct farm policy, research, education and investment toward agroecological farming.
- Halt expansion of industrial agrofuels in developing countries.
- Stabilize commodity prices through international and domestic food reserves.
- Establish fair regional and global trade arrangements.
- Re-regulate commodity futures markets to end excessive speculation.
- Guarantee the right to healthy food and living wages.

For more information, see:

IAASTD Reports, <http://www.agassessment.org/>

Pesticide Action Network Issue Brief, "Agroecology: the Science of Sustainable Development," <http://www.panna.org/food-crisis> and "IAASTD Report from Johannesburg: Business as Usual is Not an Option,"

<http://www.panna.org/mag/summer2008/agriculture/business-as-usual-is-not-an-option>

Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy Briefing on "Why the Lugar-Casey Global Food Security Act will Fail to Curb Hunger," http://www.foodfirst.org/files/pdf/PB_18_Lugar-Casey_Full_15Apr09.pdf

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National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), founded in 1986, unites and strengthens the voices and actions of its diverse grassroots members to demand viable livelihoods for family farmers, safe and healthy food for everyone, and economically and environmentally sound rural communities.

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