

Industrial agriculture receiving bulk of Africa's agricultural development funding

Investments by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Kenya and Switzerland still reinforce status quo in agricultural research

NAIROBI, NAIROBI, KENYA, June 10, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Money flows in agricultural development are still reinforcing damaging industrial models in Africa, according to a new report by Biovision, IPES-Food and the UK-based Institute of Development Studies.

The [Money Flows report](#) looks at investments in sub-Saharan Africa with a focus on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the biggest philanthropic investor in agri-development, Switzerland, a major bilateral donor, and Kenya, one of Africa's leading recipients and implementers of agricultural research for development or AgR4D. Kenya ranks third in sub-Saharan Africa in spending on agricultural research after Nigeria and South Africa.

New data shows that only a fraction of agricultural research funding in Africa is being used to transform food and farming systems:

- Only 3% of Gates Foundation projects in Africa support sustainable, regenerative approaches – or 'agroecology';
- as many as 85% of projects funded by the Gates Foundation, the world's biggest philanthropic investor in agri-development, are limited to developing industrial agriculture, or increasing its efficiency;
- 13% of projects by Kenyan research institutes are agroecological. Another 13% focus on



Hans Herren, President of Biovision and member of IPES-Food

replacing synthetic inputs with organic alternatives;

- as many as 51% of Swiss-funded projects have agroecological components, but only a handful are truly systemic.

Biovision president Hans Herren said: “Most governments, both in developing and developed countries, still favour ‘green revolution’ approaches, with the belief that chemical-intensive, large-scale industrial agriculture is the only way to produce sufficient food.”

“But these approaches have failed,” warns Herren, winner of the 1995 World Food Prize and 2013 Right Livelihood Award. “They have failed ecosystems, farming communities, and an entire continent.”

Herren added: “With the compound challenges of climate change, pressure on land and water, food-induced health problems and pandemics such as COVID, we need change now. And this starts with money flowing into agroecology.”

Approximately 30% of farms around the world are estimated to have redesigned their production systems around agroecological principles, the report says.

The report finds that support for agroecology is now growing across the agri-development community, particularly in light of climate change, but this hasn’t yet translated into a meaningful shift in funding flows.

Around 13% of projects carried out by Kenyan research institutes are ‘agroecological’, with a further 13% of projects focussing on the substitution of synthetic inputs.

Olivia Yambi, co-chair of IPES-Food, said: “We need to change funding flows and unequal power relations. It’s clear that in Africa as elsewhere, vested interests are propping up agricultural practices based on an obsession with technological fixes that is damaging soils and livelihoods, and creating a dependency on the world’s biggest agri-businesses. Agroecology offers a way out of that vicious cycle.”

To accelerate this shift to agroecology, the report calls on donors to: shift towards long-term, pooled funding models; require projects to be co-designed with farmers and communities; increase the share of funding going to African organisations; and increase transparency in how their projects are funded, monitored and measured for impact.

The Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development is a not-for-profit organisation involved in ecological and sustainable development projects in Africa, and advocating for sustainable development worldwide.

The International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) is an independent, expert panel that works towards the transition to sustainable food systems worldwide.

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) is a global research and learning organisation for equitable and sustainable change.

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