

Press Release

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U.S. groups call for leadership from the Obama administration at the World Summit on Food Security

Administration's support for genetic engineering and trade deregulation are troubling

Rome – As the World Summit on Food Security begins tomorrow in Rome, U.S. civil society organizations expressed concern with the Obama administration's support for increasing intensive, large-scale agriculture production and trade expansion as a solution to rising global hunger—failed approaches that have actually contributed to the global food crisis.

In a letter signed by 23 U.S. organizations, the groups thanked the administration for its efforts to increase foreign assistance and to better coordinate government agencies in responding to the global food crisis. But they questioned why the administration has not recognized the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology (IAASTD) report, supported by over 50 countries, “which represents a global consensus about what course international investment in agriculture should take to meet social and environmental goals.” Instead, the Obama administration aggressively promoted the use of patented genetically engineered seeds and increasing large-scale production practices, the groups charged.

“Our officials, along with U.S. agribusiness, are spreading the myth that more intensive production can feed the world, a message that is not only incorrect but dangerous in terms of its harmful impacts on sustainable livelihoods for the majority of food producers, and its exacerbation of the converging climate, economic, water and energy crises,” said the letter.

The groups called on the Obama administration to take bold action to resolve the global food crisis in a way that is healthy for people and the environment. The letter outlined 10 recommendations that focused on issues such as trade reform, food aid funding, market regulation and investments in sustainable agriculture. Other specific recommendations called for the administration to:

- Adopt the findings of the IAASTD report which outlines best practices to build sustainable agriculture systems that engage people in local solutions.
- Use its influence to strengthen the UN Food and Agriculture Committee on Food Security to improve coordination among governments, intergovernmental institutions and civil society.
- Change its trade policies to allow developing countries policy space to build their internal markets and to defend themselves against volatile agri-food imports that undermine local—especially smallholder—producers.

“It’s unfortunate that the Obama administration has been joined so closely at the hip of the genetic engineering industry in responding to the global food crisis,” said Alexandra Spielfoch of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. “The World Summit on Food Security is an opportunity to change course and join the global consensus on a more sustainable approach that would enable countries facing hunger to feed themselves.”

Groups that signed the letter include: Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Food & Water Watch, Pesticide Action Network North America, Grassroots International, Food First, Greenpeace USA,

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, World Hunger Year, Robert F. Kennedy Center for Human Rights, the Center of Concern and the National Family Farm Coalition.

You can read the full letter at: www.iatp.org.

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