

**Letter from academics, scientists & researchers
expressing concern regarding FAO's announcement of plans to forge a new strategic
partnership with CropLife International**

19 November 2020

Director-General Qu Dongyu
UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Rome, Italy

Dear Director General Qu,

We write as scientists, researchers and academics to express our deep concern over your recently announced plans to "renew and strengthen" the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's alliance with CropLife International — the trade association for the pesticide/biotech industry — and to "explore new partnerships" with that industry.

Your proposal to deepen FAO's collaboration with CropLife International undermines FAO's policy on minimizing the harms of chemical pesticide use worldwide, including the risks associated with highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs), many of which are produced by CropLife members such as Bayer Crop Science, Corteva Agriscience, Syngenta, BASF and FMC.

UN institutions including the FAO should not be supporting a consortium of private businesses that stand to profit from the continued sale of products with documented harmful impacts on biodiversity including pollinators, ecosystem integrity and function, the health and livelihood of peasant farmers, vulnerable agricultural workers, rural and Indigenous communities. These sales are increasing in many countries of the Global South. A strategic alignment by FAO with this industry poses a fundamental conflict of interest with the UN mission and mandate to protect biodiversity, support the public good, and respect, protect and fulfill human rights such as the rights to health, a safe working environment, clean air and water, among others. **This arrangement is the equivalent of the World Health Organization announcing a joint venture with Philip Morris to prevent lung cancer**

Furthermore, your proposed strategic alignment with CropLife undercuts FAO's exemplary work to date in advancing agroecology, an approach that has been recognized by the High Level Panel of Experts' 2019 report as offering robust pathways towards urgently needed transformations of our food and farming systems. Continued reliance on hazardous chemical pesticides — arguably an inevitable outcome of your plans to deepen collaboration with the global manufacturers of those very products — is incongruent with FAO's responsibility to strengthen member states' technical and policy capacities in health-protective, ecologically sound and sustainable agriculture.

Finally, we strongly endorse the letter of concern sent to your office on 19 November by over 350 civil society organizations from over 60 countries around the world.

We urge you to immediately withdraw your proposal to formalize FAO's collaboration with CroLife International and instead, to "renew and strengthen" FAO's commitment to an agroecological transformation of our food and farming systems and to the reduction of reliance on hazardous chemical pesticides and those technologies designed to perpetuate their use.

Sincerely,

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