



## U.S. Congress Must Change Course on Africa Agriculture Funding

After 15 years and US\$1 billion in donor funding for the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), U.S. Congress and other donors should reconsider this failing effort when it reauthorizes funding through the Global Food Security Act this year. A recent evaluation commissioned for USAID and other donors confirmed independent findings that AGRA is failing to increase productivity and food security for African farmers.

African [faith](#) and [community leaders](#) representing 200 million small-scale producers wrote USAID and other donors telling them the initiative was “doing more harm than good.” USAID did not heed that call nor consider the flaws revealed in the evaluation, [vowing continued support for AGRA](#). On March 30, those [African leaders briefed members](#) of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, who did listen to their concerns. On April 27, [three members asked the Appropriations Committee](#) to reconsider funding when it reauthorizes the Global Food Security Act this year.

As Kenyan civil society leader Anne Maina put it: “U.S. taxpayers should not be impoverishing African farmers with programs that are supposed to help them. They should not be making wealthy, male farmers richer. They should not be making African farmers more vulnerable to climate change by making them dependent on fossil-fuel based inputs that deplete rather than restore fragile soils.”

### Failing Africa’s Farmers

AGRA was founded in 2006 to give new impetus to the fight against hunger in Africa, promising a productivity revolution with its promotion of commercial seeds and fertilizers. Its goal was to double the yields and incomes of 30 million small-scale farming households by 2020, reducing poverty and halving hunger in the focus countries. To achieve these goals, AGRA received over one billion US dollars –mainly from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, but also from governments like the US, UK and Germany.

The [new evaluation](#), carried out by consulting firm Mathematica, confirmed many of the findings from a [2020 Tufts University assessment](#), which showed that in AGRA’s focus countries yields have risen slowly and only for a few crops, poverty remains endemic, and the number of chronically hungry people has increased 31% rather than decreasing by half.

In its evaluation of AGRA’s Partnership for Inclusive Agricultural Transformation in Africa (PIATA), which USAID funds:

- **Limited yield growth** – “PIATA improved maize yields in Ethiopia, Ghana, and Nigeria, but not in Tanzania, Burkina Faso, or Kenya.”
- **Few income gains for farmers** – “Only farmers in Burkina Faso experienced improved maize sales as a result of PIATA.”

- **Wealthy male farmers benefiting** – “Farmers who adopted improved inputs and experienced yield increases were typically younger, male, and relatively wealthier.”
- **Damage to the environment** – AGRA’s “agricultural technologies and practices—such as fertilizer use and rice cultivation—can negatively impact environmental conditions and greenhouse gas emissions.”
- **Little impact on hunger** – “These findings suggest that AGRA did not meet its headline goal of increased incomes and food security for 9 million smallholders.”

### AGRA - “Doing more harm than good”

The negative impacts on farmers are well-documented:

- Farmers are ending up in debt as they pay high prices for seeds and fertilizers, which often fail to produce high yields. One group of Kenyan women lost their pooled savings and some household possessions after they used them as collateral for loans, in the form of maize seeds and fertilizer. They lost the right to choose their seeds and had to pay the loan back in cash.
- With the increase in fertilizer prices and unreliable supply chains, farmers who adopted AGRA’s Green Revolution package found they could not get seeds or fertilizers last year, leaving them desperate to recover the seeds they had given up.
- With constant sowing of corn, year after year, farmers saw their soils grow acidic and less fertile, forcing them to buy more fertilizer just to maintain their yields.

Congress should listen to African community leaders who represent the supposed beneficiaries of AGRA. They are calling on AGRA donors to change course away from failing Green Revolution programs and toward promising innovations that work with nature, build crop and diet diversity, are climate-resilient, and empower farmers, particularly women, to improve their farms and feed their families.

Secondly, Congress should support the language in the congressional letter requiring USAID to submit a report to the Appropriations Committee detailing USAID’s funding of AGRA since 2006 and the documented outcomes on food insecurity, climate, gender, and poverty alleviation. It also requires that USAID submit the report within 90 days of the passage of the FY2023 appropriations bill.

In a [Scientific American article](#), AFSA General Coordinator Million Belay wrote “[w]e welcome investment in agriculture on our continent, but we seek it in a form that is democratic and responsive to the people at the heart of agriculture.”

Thank you. For more information, please contact:

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