

Industrialized Farming Endangers World Food Supply

By Karin Friedemann

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Multi-national food corporations are increasingly using global food insecurity as a tool for political control. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) reports that "land grabbing" by foreign investors in developing countries has resulted in a new form of colonialism. Spanish NGO, GRAIN reports that rich countries are buying poor countries' fertile soil, water and sun to ship food and fuel back home. IFPRI researcher Joachim von Braun states, "About one-quarter of these investments are for biofuel plantations."

Agribusiness imposes a devastating toll on small farmers worldwide. Landowners in African countries, where there are no official land deeds, have no legal recourse against foreign companies that steal their farmland. In the United States ranchers and farmers lose their land to agribusinesses and end up working as employees. American cattle ranchers have the highest suicide rate among American professions. Similar humiliations have also led thousands of farmers in India to take their own lives.

The 'Global Food Security Act' [S384] recently introduced in the US Senate will give USAID \$7.5 billion over five years. Arun Shrivastava of the Centre for Research on Globalization reports: "USAID is actually an arm of the US-Department of Defense; it serves US foreign policy interest and has little to do with humanism." There are two other similar pending bills, HR875 and S425.

Michael Pollan, author of *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*, points out that while purporting to address issues of global nutrition and health, "the US Congress is hell bent on introducing laws with global reach that would destroy the very basis of people's food security and food sovereignty."

HR 875, the Food Safety and Modernization Act of 2009, writes Barbara Minton in *Natural News*, "would effectively hand over control of America's food supply to such a nefarious giant as Monsanto and its lesser counterparts such as Tyson and Cargill."

Monsanto GMO corn plants, which were designed with a built-in

resistance to Monsanto's weed killers, have already devastated thousands of South African farmers. The corn plants look healthy, but inside the husks there are no kernels! This GMO crop failure highlights the dangers of agribusiness domination of the global food supply.

"To ensure the perpetuation of its near monopoly, Monsanto is helping to install the right people in the right places," Minton continues. "To that end, Michael Taylor, the ex FDA head who approved the use of bovine growth hormone (rBGH), has just become ensconced in the Obama transition team where he may soon be overseeing food safety. He will join already well placed Tom Vilsack, the pro-GMO Secretary of Agriculture."

South Africa repeats the pattern of Iraq and of Afghanistan, where new laws prohibit farmers to save or trade their own seeds. These laws being promoted within the US would also block access to non-GMO seeds.

"Iraq, it must be remembered, has the oldest history of farming and one of the longest traditions of cultivation in the civilized world," writes Latha Jishnu in the Business Standard of India. According to the Institute of Near Eastern & African Studies (INEAS) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, "Farm-saved seeds and the free exchange of planting materials among farmers have long been the basis of agricultural practice in Iraq."

The Oil-for-Food program in Iraq forced the large-scale importation of food after the first Gulf War. Devastated Iraqi farmers then became the victims of USAID.

Under US occupation, Iraqi farmers must pay a "technology fee" plus an annual license fee to agribusinesses supplying the seeds and equipment. Similar policies exist in Afghanistan, which compel dependency on supplies from multi-national agribusinesses while industrial agricultural training courses provide the US military with opportunities to gather intelligence from the local population. A US Special Forces civil affairs manager in Afghanistan explains, "The presence of this agricultural center is a security measure in and of itself."

GRAIN reports, "The war provides these corporations with both a lucrative short-term market in the blossoming "reconstruction" industry and an opportunity to integrate Afghanistan into their

global production networks and markets in the long term."

Industrial agriculture is based on mono-cropping, use of GMO seeds, fertilizers, lethal pesticides, and expensive farm machinery. Environmentalists say these methods cause topsoil erosion, depleted soil fertility, air and water pollution, loss of biodiversity, decreased nutritional value of food, and serious health risks. Iowa State University biotech researchers are putting flu vaccines into the DNA of corn, reports Bryan Salvage in the Meat and Poultry Journal. This genetic manipulation is likely to increase the rate of viral mutation, rather than to reduce disease as claimed.

French Professor Gilles-Eric Seralini, molecular endocrinologist at the University of Caen found that Monsanto's GMO corn damages the liver and kidneys like pesticides. Hungarian biology professor Bela Darvas of Debrecen University discovered that Monsanto's corn endangers protected insect species. Spiegel reports that because corn is a wind-pollinated plant, GMO crops inevitably contaminate nearby farms. Because of these dangers, Germany has banned GMO corn.

Those wishing to avoid GMO should buy foods certified "organic."

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