

Statement by African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) on G20-Africa-Conference.

G20, please support African Smallholders and not Private Corporations!

We the representatives of African civil societies and farmers associations are tired of the continuous onslaught of our agricultural systems. The G20 agreements on agriculture and trade which focuses on investments through public, private and partnerships (PPP) towards a 'green revolution' in Africa is not suitable for African agricultural systems. In fact, this portrays global capitalism where there is increased push on the use of 'green revolution' inputs especially hybrid & GMOs seeds and associated chemicals such as synthetic fertilisers and agrochemicals disseminated by international corporations such as Bayer. These demean Africa's sustainable agriculture systems and in particular agricultural biodiversity and farmer managed seed systems on the continent. It should be noted that 80% of all seed in Africa is still produced and disseminated through farmer managed seed systems, through on-farm and seed saving and exchange among farmers. This system ensures the free flow of genetic material, thus contributing to the development of locally appropriate seeds and to the diversity of crops best suited to the environment. The government and agribusiness agenda is to restructure these systems to enable the production and distribution of improve seeds as part of the objective of increasing agricultural yields in Africa. This through 'creating and enabling environment for private companies' they have placed restrictive IP policies and directed funding away from public research institutions to private research which produce a few commercial viable crops that limit agricultural biodiversity.

We are concerned of the rapid concentration in the commercial seed and agrochemical sectors globally and Africa such as the recently approved Bayer-Monsanto merger in South Africa. The aim of these companies is to further enrich themselves and make profit from intellectual property by owning proprietary technologies, controlling big agricultural data and finding new markets for their products. This increases the monopoly of a few companies in the seed and agrochemical sector and further deepens the dependency on corporate seed and agrochemical inputs that will result from this extensive, aggressive 'green revolution' across the continent. Furthermore, it has major implications of smallholder farmers, and particular women, who feed the continent and the custodians of seed and agrobiodiversity. The mergers will further entrench the future direction of the farming system and marginalize more sustainable methods such as agroecology that is increasingly being called for by organisations representing smallholder African farmers.

We urge the G20 to ensure that they support African farmers and not support private corporations. In their deliberations they should put agroecology first as the solution to the future farming of the African continent. Furthermore, they should ensure that support is directed to strengthening farmer managed seeds systems in Africa, which is a more viable solution in dealing with poverty, nutrition, risk management/resilience and climate change.

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