

Statement on AGRA (Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa)

The undersigned organizations support and represent the interests of smallholder farmers and livestock keepers from Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, and are concerned with the conservation of agricultural biodiversity for livelihood security and food sovereignty, promoting farmers' self-determination, and citizen involvement in the decision-making process.

Many of us met in Uganda from 20-22 September to discuss intellectual property, food security and farmers' rights. We concluded that many philanthropic and corporate initiatives in the region are promoting big-business interests through harmonization of seed laws and using intellectual property to establish corporate control over seeds that for centuries have been developed, freely exchanged and used by African farmers. The approach promoted by these initiatives threatens the interests of farming communities across Africa, and undermines agricultural biodiversity and food sovereignty. In particular, the meeting expressed serious concerns about AGRA – the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa.

We are concerned that AGRA is imposing a corporate-controlled seed and chemical system of agriculture on smallholder farmers, appropriating Africa's indigenous seed varieties, weakening Africa's rich and complex biodiversity, and undermining seed and food sovereignty of farming communities, who make up the majority of our populations.

Women are the main seed savers and seed breeders of Africa. Women produce 70% of Africa's food, and provide 70% of the agricultural labour. Women are the main keepers of Africa's rich agricultural biodiversity, and manage complex agricultural production systems to provide the balanced diets that their families and children need.

AGRA aims to develop 100 new varieties of core food crops such as maize, cassava, sorghum and millet, using current publicly owned genetic material developed with indigenous traditional knowledge. But who will own the Intellectual Property and Plant Breeder's Rights for these new seed varieties? We are concerned that as a result of the AGRA seed program, the rich pool of African indigenous seed varieties will become the property of corporate seed companies, displacing and reducing farmers' access to indigenous varieties, and locking them into an expensive high-input agricultural system.

We urge African governments and farmer organisations to reconsider the approach and explore the impact of policy changes on their local agricultural systems, farmers' rights, and food sovereignty. We believe that supporting appropriation of seeds through intellectual property not only facilitates bio-piracy of local genetic resources but also undermines farmers' rights and threatens agricultural biodiversity and food sovereignty in Africa. Our meeting also concluded that national or regional legal frameworks that take on or that impose obligations similar to UPOV 1991 are not suitable for African agricultural systems and will undermine farmers' rights and food

sovereignty in the region. AGRA's emphasis on the profit motive as the driving force of economic development, and its long-term orientation towards the rolling out of Green Revolution technologies based on biotechnology, synthetic fertilisers and debt-driven commercialisation place it on a potential collision course with the agro-ecological approaches proposed by the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) sponsored by the World Bank and the UN, and endorsed by farmer-based sovereignty movements. The study by 400 scientists from 60 countries found that industrial agriculture is no solution for poverty and hunger. We believe AGRA will instil a whole new rural agribusiness chain as a conduit for agro-inputs and indoctrinate a new breed of scientists who will transfer African genetic resources into private hands.

We fear that the policy changes that AGRA proposes will result in the privatization of land, water, seeds and knowledge systems, and create dependency on credit and subsidies, weakening farmers' resilience and food sovereignty. We call upon AGRA to show more respect and understanding of complex food security and agriculture systems, rethink the one-size-fits-all approach to agricultural development and policy making, and put the views of Africa's farmers above the interests of corporate agribusiness.

Signed by:

1. ActionAid, *Tanzania*
2. ActionAid, *Uganda*
3. Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment, *Uganda*
4. African Biodiversity Network – representing 36 organisations in Africa
5. African Centre for Biosafety, *South Africa*
6. Centre for Health, Human Rights and Development, *Uganda*
7. Community Technology Development Trust, *Zimbabwe*
8. Eastern & Southern Africa Farmer's Forum, *Tanzania*
9. Eastern & Southern Africa Farmer's Forum, *Uganda*
10. Eastern & Southern Africa Farmer's Forum, *Zambia*
11. Envirocare, *Tanzania*
12. Ethio-Organic Seed Action, *Ethiopia*
13. Food Rights Alliance, *Uganda*
14. Inades Formation, *Kenya*
15. Kenya Biodiversity Coalition – representing 67 civil society groups
16. National Organic Agricultural Movement of Uganda
17. Participatory Ecological Land Use Management – representing 230 civil society groups including
18. PELUM Kenya,
19. PELUM Rwanda,
20. PELUM Tanzania and
21. PELUM Uganda.
22. Southern and Eastern African Trade, Information and Negotiations Institute, *Uganda*
23. Surplus People Project, *South Africa*
24. Tanzania Alliance for Biodiversity, *Tanzania* - representing 15 organisations
25. The Pincer Group International Ltd, *Uganda*
26. Third World Network
27. União Nacional de Camponeses (National Farmers Union), *Moçambique*
28. Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns, *Uganda*