

CIRCULATING FOR SIGN ON, NOT FOR DISTRUBUTION



November XX, 2020

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

Dear Director General Qu,

The XX civil society and Indigenous Peoples organizations listed below, representing tens of thousands of farmers, fisherfolk, faith-based institutions and other communities from XX countries, are writing to express our deep concern over your [stated plans](#) to strengthen official ties with CropLife International. We strongly urge you to reconsider this alliance.

Deepening collaboration with CropLife, a trade association representing the interests of corporations which produce and promote dangerous pesticides, directly undermines FAO's [stated priority](#) of minimizing the harms of pesticide use worldwide, "including the progressive ban of highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs)." It undermines the principles set out in FAO's Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management, and ties the agency with producers of harmful, unsustainable chemical technologies — relinquishing FAO's role as a global leader supporting innovative approaches to agricultural production that promote the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security, sustainability and resilience.

Reliance on hazardous pesticides is a short-term fix that undermines the rights to adequate food and health for present and future generations, as stated in the 2017 [report](#) of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food.

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A recent [analysis](#) of industry records documents that CropLife members, BASF, Bayer Crop Science, Corteva Agriscience, FMC and Syngenta, make more than one-third of their sales income from HHPs — the pesticides that are most harmful to human health and the environment. Their primary aim is to maximise sales of their products, irrespective of health and environmental harms — and whether or not these products are necessary or actually benefit farmers. FAO, in contrast, should aim to increase farmer access to practices and tools that help them grow their crops sustainably without harming their health.

In addition, CropLife member companies [explicitly target](#) developing and emerging countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia as expanding markets for their products, taking advantage of weak controls on registration and commercialization of pesticides. The proportion of their HHP sales is even higher in these countries, where safety regulations are often less robust, and harms to human health and the environment are greater.

The global pesticide corporations that make up CropLife are well known for aggressive marketing of HHPs that are responsible for a wide range of devastating health harms to farmers, farmworkers and rural families around the world. One recent systematic literature review (in press) found that an estimated 43 percent of farmers around the world suffer unintentional acute pesticide poisoning every year. Farmers, [agricultural workers](#) and those in rural communities also suffer increased rates of certain types of cancer as well as reproductive, neurological and developmental disorders due to pesticide exposure. As recently highlighted by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, pesticide products produced by CropLife member companies have also decimated [pollinator populations](#) and are wreaking havoc on biodiversity and fragile ecosystems. Some specific examples include:

- *Syngenta's herbicide paraquat* is one of the most acutely toxic pesticides in the world, and has been linked to Parkinson's Disease and many other health harms. Banned in Europe since 2007, it is still exported and in widespread use.
- *Corteva's insecticide chlorpyrifos* harms brain development, resulting in developmental delays and lower IQs. It has been banned in several U.S. states, Europe and four other countries, but production and use continues.
- *Bayer's imidacloprid* and other neonicotinoid systemic insecticides have devastated pollinator populations. One [recent study](#) found that overall, U.S. farmland is *48 times more toxic* to insects than it was 20 years ago.
- *BASF's fipronil* has been implicated in [mass bee deaths](#) in many countries, including France, Brazil and South Africa.

These are just a few examples of the harmful impacts of the thousands of products produced and promoted by the corporations that are members of CropLife International.

CropLife frequently asserts that it aims to provide “environmentally friendly” technology, through the genetically modified (GM) seeds that its member corporations also produce. A large proportion of these seeds, however, are engineered to be used in conjunction with proprietary chemical herbicides. These GM seeds are thus primarily a mechanism to boost associated chemical sales, and ensure continued profit from pesticides such as glyphosate and now (in response to glyphosate resistance in weeds) the highly drift-prone herbicides 2,4-D, dicamba and

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glufosinate. These technologies lock farmers into ever escalating use of pesticides, particularly when resistance develops.

An alliance with CropLife also undercuts your agency's critical — and urgently needed — support for agroecology, an ecologically-based approach to farming which [FAO itself notes](#) “can support food production and food security and nutrition while restoring the ecosystem services and biodiversity that are essential for sustainable agriculture.”

In contrast, CropLife's purpose is to advocate for use of its members' products. These antiquated chemical solutions to pest control run directly counter to the urgently needed transition to innovative, knowledge-intensive ecological approaches that FAO has been supporting in recent years. Agroecological systems have proven to be economically viable across the globe, promote rather than harm human health, and are more “resilient and robust so they can withstand increasing volatility and climate shocks, deliver affordable and sustainable healthy diets for all, and decent livelihoods for food system workers” — the [exact goals](#) your agency recently highlighted on World Food Day.

We understand you will be submitting this new “strategy for collaboration with the private sector” to FAO member states for evaluation before the end of 2020. We strongly urge you to reconsider and discontinue this deeply inappropriate alliance with CropLife.

Sincerely,