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Industrial agriculture receiving bulk of Africa's agricultural development funding

Investments by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Kenya and Switzerland still reinforce status quo in agricultural research

10 June 2020 – Money flows in agricultural development are still reinforcing damaging industrial models in Africa, according to a [new report](#) by Biovision, IPES-Food and the Institute of Development Studies.

New data shows that only a fraction of agricultural research funding in Africa is being used to transform food and farming systems:

- Only **3% of Gates Foundation projects in Africa** support sustainable, regenerative approaches – or '[agroecology](#)';
- as many as **85% of projects** funded by the [Gates Foundation](#), the world's biggest philanthropic investor in agri-development, are limited to developing industrial agriculture, or increasing its efficiency;
- **13% of projects** by [Kenyan research institutes](#) are agroecological. Another 13% focus on replacing synthetic inputs with organic alternatives;
- as many as **51% of Swiss-funded projects** have agroecological components, but only a handful are truly systemic.

Approximately **30% of farms** around the world are estimated to have redesigned their production systems around agroecological principles. The report finds that support for agroecology is now growing across the agri-development community, particularly in light of climate change, but this hasn't yet translated into a meaningful shift in funding flows. The authors argue that change can't come soon enough.

Biovision president **Hans Herren** said: "Most governments, both in developing and developed countries still favour 'green revolution' approaches, with the belief that industrial agriculture is the only way to produce sufficient food. The same goes for the Gates Foundation and its development agency AGRA. But these approaches have failed. They have failed ecosystems, farming communities, and an entire continent."

Herren added: "With the compound challenges of climate change, pressure on land and water, food-induced health problems *and* pandemics such as COVID, we need change now. And this starts with money flowing into agroecology."

To accelerate this shift, the report calls on donors to: shift towards long-term, pooled funding models; require projects to be co-designed with farmers and communities; increase the share of funding going to African organisations; and increase transparency in how their projects are funded, monitored and measured for impact.

Olivia Yambi, co-chair of IPES-Food, said: “We need to change funding flows and unequal power relations. It’s clear that in Africa as elsewhere, vested interests are propping up agricultural practices based on an obsession with technological fixes that is damaging soils and livelihoods, and creating a dependency on the world’s biggest agri-businesses. Agroecology offers a way out of that vicious cycle.”

The **Biovision** Foundation for Ecological Development is a [not-for-profit organisation](#) involved in ecological and sustainable development projects in Africa, and advocating for sustainable development worldwide.

The **International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food)** is an independent, [expert panel](#) that works towards the transition to sustainable food systems worldwide.

The **Institute of Development Studies (IDS)** is a [global research and learning organisation](#) for equitable and sustainable change.

Experts available for interview:

English (EN), Deutsch (DE) <u>Hans Herren</u> President, Biovision	English (EN) <u>Molly Anderson</u> Panel Expert, IPES-Food	Français (EN) <u>Olivier De Schutter</u> Panel Expert, IPES-Food
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