

Critics of Bill Gates' 'industrial ag' efforts in Africa take their case to Seattle

In Kenya, where he works with small farmers, Daniel Maingi “failed miserably” in his attempts to connect with agricultural organizations funded by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

So he and fellow African activists from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Ethiopia are bringing their message to Seattle, headquarters of the world's richest philanthropy. At a Town Hall event, The Global Struggle for Food Sovereignty, argued that the foundation's push for a “Green Revolution” in Africa is a flawed attempt to impose industrial agriculture at the expense of more ecologically sound approaches to farming.

Some of the visitors, including Maingi, will meet with staff at the Gates Foundation. But it won't be the high-level gathering he had hoped for. “At least we tried,” Maingi said.

The Gates Foundation spends nearly \$400 million a year on programs to improve production and income for African farmers. Since 2006, the foundation has funneled nearly \$420 million to its flagship agricultural initiative, a collaboration called the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, or AGRA. But the foundation's outsized spending and influence have raised concerns in Africa, just as some American educators have become alarmed over the foundation's influence on the U.S. education system.

Elizabeth Mpofu, of [La Via Campesina](#), grows a variety of crops in Zimbabwe. During a recent drought, neighbors who relied on chemical fertilizer lost most of their crops, while she reaped a bounty of sorghum, corn and millet using what are called agroecological methods — natural pest control, organic fertilizer and locally adapted crops.

If she had 10 minutes with Bill Gates, Mpofu said, she would tell him about her farm and the power of agroecology.

“Maybe because we are a group from Africa, we can leave them with some new thinking,” she said, “some ideas for reviewing the way they work.”

Read full, original article: [Critics of Gates' ag programs bring the battle to Seattle](#)