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FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

The Hunger Games

How DFID support for agribusiness is fuelling poverty in Africa

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Preface

The scandal of global hunger is back in the news, and rightly so. The fact that record numbers of people are today classified as hungry, at a time when there is unprecedented wealth in the world, is a testament to the failure of the globalised food system. There is a growing consensus that this failure is the result of deliberate political choices that favour corporate interests while condemning hundreds of millions to despair. Any system that enriches a few while impoverishing the many is morally bankrupt, and must be changed.

The UK government's Department for International Development (DFID), by contrast, is using the aid budget to tighten the corporate stranglehold over the global food system. As this report reveals, DFID has been using hundreds of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money with the express purpose of extending the power of agribusiness over the production of food, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. While this will increase the profits of corporate giants such as Monsanto, Unilever and Syngenta, it threatens to disempower small farmers and rural communities and condemn them to long-term poverty. DFID's promotion of genetically modified crops will also lock small farmers into dependency on corporate providers of seeds and chemical inputs, undermining any chance of defeating hunger.

This report also lifts the lid on DFID's support for a complex network of companies and investment funds registered in one of Africa's foremost tax havens. Not only is the UK aid budget being used to support some of the world's largest multinational corporations, but several of the companies and agricultural investment funds being supported by DFID are incorporated in the secrecy jurisdiction of Mauritius. This means that UK aid to agribusiness is being routed through a known 'conduit haven', allowing companies to avoid paying taxes that could be used by national governments to support small farmers and genuine agricultural development.

DFID's record should be noted by those aid agencies which have been vocal in congratulating the UK government for its supposed leadership in the fight against global hunger. Several NGOs spoke out in this vein when British prime minister David Cameron staged a celebrity 'hunger event' to coincide with the end of the London Olympics in August 2012. Yet rather than assisting small farmers and rural communities to overcome hunger, this report shows that DFID has been using the UK aid budget to meet the commercial interests of major agribusiness companies. This is an abuse of aid that needs to be confronted, not applauded.

War on Want has engaged with the fight against global hunger ever since the organisation's founding 60 years ago. Our work has focused on challenging the root causes of the global food crisis, as well as supporting positive solutions that are socially equitable as well as environmentally sustainable. War on Want has formed longstanding partnerships with farmers' movements across the world to promote the framework of food sovereignty as a positive alternative to a capitalist food system that has condemned hundreds of millions to despair. As described in our recent report *Food Sovereignty: Reclaiming the global food system*, this framework offers a solution to the food crisis based on principles of local empowerment, equity and agroecology. This is what DFID should be supporting with the UK aid budget, not more corporate control.

John Hilary

John Hilary
Executive Director
War on Want

1. Aid-funded agribusiness

The UK government's Department for International Development (DFID) is required by law to devote British aid to the reduction of poverty across the world – a requirement that applies to DFID's agricultural aid as much as it does to other sectors. DFID claims that its investment in agriculture helps small farmers and the "very poorest" people.[1] Yet hundreds of millions of pounds of British taxpayers' money is being used to promote projects designed to benefit the world's richest agribusiness corporations and to extend their control over the global food system. This is nothing less than a scandal when hundreds of millions of people – over half of them small farmers – go hungry.

DFID's website lists 72 bilateral agricultural aid projects worth around £180 million in 2012 and £270 million in 2011. In addition, some of DFID's support to multilateral organisations such as the EU, World Bank and the UN is spent on agricultural projects. As this report shows, much of DFID's support for agribusiness is channelled through public-private partnerships such as the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT), Grow Africa and the New Vision for Agriculture. This includes support for genetically modified (GM) food through DFID's funding of initiatives such as the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) and HarvestPlus.

War on Want's previous report *Food Sovereignty: Reclaiming the global food system* documented the power that major agribusiness corporations wield over the global production, distribution and consumption of food, and the catastrophic impact this has on farmers worldwide. According to the United Nations Environment Programme:[2]

- Just four seed companies now control over half the world's commercial seed market
- The biggest 10 pesticide corporations (four of which are also among the top 10 seed companies) together control 82% of the world pesticides market
- The top 10 food processing corporations control 28% of the global food processing market
- The top 15 supermarket companies account for over 30% of global food sales

Control means profit. In 2010, the world's four largest agrochemical companies (Bayer, Dow, Syngenta and Monsanto) and three largest grain traders (Bunge, Cargill and ADM) together made profits of US$20 billion. Such profits come at a time when the world is experiencing record levels of hunger, and the connection between the two is clear. As global agriculture becomes increasingly dominated by the power of agribusiness, small-scale peasant farmers and indigenous peoples become more vulnerable to hunger and poverty. Locked into dependency on corporate seeds and chemical inputs, small farmers find themselves trapped in an escalating spiral of debt and despair. In India, over 150,000 farmers have committed suicide as a result of this chronic indebtedness.[3]

DFID has long championed a model of agriculture based on free trade, corporate-owned technology and greater private sector control over the production and distribution of food. Accordingly, much of DFID's aid to agriculture is designed to extend the power of agribusiness over the global food system. DFID is promoting the supply of chemical inputs and seeds sold by major agribusiness corporations, which reinforces the subordinate role of small farmers in global supply chains. The effect is to give agribusiness corporations access to new markets to expand their sales. For small farmers, by contrast, the model locks them into a dependency on private sector forces beyond their control, and turns them into contract labourers producing mainly for the profit of others. As this report shows, DFID is also at the centre of an intricate nexus of

Photo: FCO

corporations and donor-sponsored institutions seeking to maximise private profit from agriculture, at the expense of the world's poorest people. Personal connections play a vital role, and there is a significant 'revolving door' of staff between DFID and agribusiness corporations. Indeed, the personal links go beyond DFID to the heart of the UK government and its economic policy.

The UK government is committed to using all the tools at its disposal to advance British commercial interests, and its export promotion arm UK Trade & Investment provides a dedicated 'aid-funded business' service that advises corporations on how to make money out of aid budgets.[4] 'Tied aid' – the practice of using official development assistance to promote the commercial interests of donor nations – is banned under the International Development Act 2002. Yet official guidance issued jointly by DFID, the Foreign Office and UK Trade & Investment in April 2011 instructs DFID staff that they can support commercial benefits to the UK resulting from the use of aid "provided that they are not its primary purpose". The guidance continues: "There are many practical ways in which DFID, UKTI and FCO can work together to deliver UK commercial priorities resulting in a win-win for trade and development."[5] DFID has stepped up its efforts to help British business secure new markets, especially in Africa. Former Secretary of State for International Development Andrew Mitchell told the London School of Business in July 2011: "If this is a moment of opportunity in many places across Africa, it is also a moment of huge opportunity for business… this Coalition Government is working to make it easier for companies to do business in Africa… Africa is the next, maybe even the last, big market."[6]

DFID's support for agribusiness is by no means restricted to advancing UK commercial interests. Under the guise of promoting 'food security', DFID has used the aid budget to take forward an ideological agenda of support for agribusiness, regardless of any corporation's home country. In addition, this report reveals DFID's involvement in a network of private enterprises and investment fund managers incorporated in the secrecy jurisdiction of Mauritius. Not only is DFID using the aid budget to support agribusiness corporations; it is also at the heart of a network of private sector companies being run out of one of Africa's foremost tax havens.

2. DFID and Monsanto

Monsanto is one of the world's largest seed and agrochemical companies, with 21,000 employees spread across 66 countries. Headquartered in the US city of St Louis, Missouri, it sells maize, soya bean, cotton, wheat, canola, sorghum and sugar cane seeds the world over, as well as 18 brands of herbicides. Monsanto is also one of the leading corporate promoters of biotechnology and GM. In 2011, it recorded sales of $11.8 billion and net profits of $1.6 billion.[7]

DFID is using the UK aid budget to support Monsanto through the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and its promotion of agro-dealer networks. AGRA is a private organisation backed by DFID, USAID and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, among others, which seeks to "trigger a uniquely African Green Revolution that transforms agriculture into a highly productive, efficient, competitive and sustainable system that assures food security and lifts millions out of poverty".[8] This is despite the known social and environmental disasters caused by the Green Revolution in Asia and Latin America from the 1970s onwards, including significant increases in the numbers of people going hungry.[9] DFID provided £7 million in core funding to AGRA during 2008-11.

AGRA's main programme is providing support to agro-dealer networks: small, private stockists of chemicals and seeds who sell these inputs on to farmers. These networks function as vehicles to promote the products sold by agribusiness corporations, and in so doing they increase the reliance of farmers on the chemical inputs provided by those corporations, marginalising sustainable agriculture alternatives. As noted in the case study overleaf, the main supplier to the agro-dealers in Malawi has been Monsanto, responsible for 67% of total inputs. Monsanto's country manager in Malawi admitted that **all** of Monsanto's sales of seeds and herbicides are made through the AGRA-supported agro-dealer network.

Monsanto is also a partner in the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), another initiative to which DFID provides core funding. The AATF is a leading force in the promotion of GM food, its current strategy stating unequivocally that it aims at the "adoption of genetically modified crops".[10] DFID is spending £7.5 million on supporting the AATF during 2010-14, in addition to the £5 million already provided in 2004-09. DFID's website notes that it "has been a core donor of AATF since its establishment in 2004", and that DFID funds "have been pivotal in supporting both core and project activities".[11] DFID's funding to the AATF is also designed to "promote public understanding and policy support for its products", and AATF confirms it will "monitor the Press and public opinion and be proactive in providing product-specific information that addresses concerns regarding issues such as genetic engineering or intellectual property protection".[12]

Both DFID and Monsanto sit on the Design Committee of the AATF, which helped shape the foundation and selected its pilot crop research projects. One of AATF's current five projects is on cowpea, and specifically develops "transgenic [i.e. GM] cowpea varieties that are resistant to the *Maruca* pest", with Monsanto as the private sector

partner for the project.[13] Another AATF project is Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA), which is a further GM initiative seeking to develop drought-tolerant maize. AATF notes that WEMA is incorporating a drought-tolerant trait developed by Monsanto and BASF "using transgenic breeding, sometimes referred to as genetic modification". Field trials of the GM maize are already underway in South Africa, Kenya and Uganda, while Mozambique and Tanzania are also working towards starting similar trials.[14] Overcoming popular resistance to GM in Africa is integral to WEMA's success: "Creating awareness on the benefits that the WEMA drought-tolerant maize varieties will bring to smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa and to build support from all the relevant stakeholders is a crucial component of the project."[15]

The AATF not only develops GM technology but seeks to counter opposition to it through changing national regulation. In June 2012, AATF Executive Director Denis Kyetere referred to "immediate challenges to overcome so as to advance biotechnology development" in Africa, which included "emerging regulatory / biosafety frameworks that may delay smallholder farmers from accessing the tools of biotechnology". Kyetere was referring to the fact that only three countries – South Africa, Burkina Faso and Egypt – have so far commercialised GM crops, while a further six countries have biosafety laws in place allowing for such commercialisation.[16]

DFID promotes Monsanto's interests in a number of projects which deepen farmers' reliance on chemical pesticides, herbicides, fertilizer and hybrid seeds. These inputs are expensive for poor farmers, and reliance on them can lock farmers into dependency on the multinational corporation concerned, especially in the case of hybrid seeds which can be used for only one season. The multinationals selling the chemicals and seeds, on the other hand, reap substantial benefits from aid projects promoting farmers' use of these inputs, since they give these companies access to new markets. DFID and Monsanto are also partners in the World Economic Forum's New Vision for Agriculture and its SAGCOT project, described later in this report.

In Kenya and Tanzania, DFID has been funding a company called Farm Input Promotions Africa (FIPS-Africa) in projects to provide farmers with agro-chemicals and seeds supplied by companies including Monsanto, Bayer and DuPont Pioneer.[17] By developing networks of village-based agricultural advisers who conduct demonstrations of seeds and chemical products and sell them to farmers, FIPS-Africa has become "an integral part of Monsanto's marketing operation to small farmers in Kenya".[18] By September 2010 the scheme had reached more than 37,000 smallholders in 165 villages in western Kenya.[19] DFID reports note that "in cooperation" with Monsanto and a Kenyan firm, the Western Seed Company, 15,000 mini-packs of seed varieties were distributed to farmers in Kenya and a network of over 120 farm input stockists was established throughout the country's Central Province. In addition, "FIPS-Africa, with cooperation of Monsanto, developed a new method for promotion of herbicides" by which around 3,000 farmers were visited and Monsanto's herbicide *Roundup Max* was demonstrated on a 5 x 10m plot. "It can be concluded that the promotion method was very successful in catalysing adoption of *Roundup Max* by small-scale farmers," the DFID document notes.[20]

3. DFID and Monsanto in Malawi

The main programme of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is promoting agro-dealer networks: small, private stockists who sell chemicals and seeds to farmers. In Malawi, AGRA provided a $4.3 million grant for the Malawi Agro-dealer Strengthening Programme (MASP), which funded an expansion of the network, training agro-dealers and providing them with finance. The inputs supplied by the agro-dealers are hybrid maize seeds and agro-chemical pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers.[21]

The main supplier to the agro-dealers in Malawi has been Monsanto, responsible for 67% of all inputs. Indeed, Monsanto's country manager Paul Chimimba told us in an interview that **all** of Monsanto's sales of seeds and herbicides are made through the AGRA-supported agro-dealer network, which enables it to reach farmers across the country. [22] A project evaluation report states that the programme achieved an 85% increase in sales by agro-dealers, and that they sold 10,908 tonnes of seed and 18,071 tonnes of fertilizers during 2007-10. In all 10 maize hybrids were sold: five from Monsanto and five from another company, SeedCo.[23]

Monsanto is the leading seller of herbicide in Malawi (mainly through its Roundup brand) controlling 60% of the market. It is also the largest hybrid seed seller, selling six varieties and controlling 50% of the hybrid seed market. Monsanto currently sells 4,200 tonnes of hybrid seeds a year out of a market of around 8,500 tonnes. But the market for all seeds (not just hybrids) in Malawi is around 30,000 tonnes, the huge majority of which is traditional or recycled seed used by small farmers. Monsanto's country manager told our researcher: "Our target is to get more of that 30,000 tonnes market. Our goal is to take the whole 30,000 tonnes into improved [i.e. hybrid] seed."[24]

MASP project literature makes no secret of the fact that the agro-dealer network is designed to create demand by farmers for the products of multinational corporations. "Agro-dealers… act as vessels for promoting input suppliers' products," one project document reads.[25] Another states: "supply companies have expressed their appreciation for field days because MASP trained agro-dealers are helping them promote their products in the very remotest areas of Malawi."[26] In October 2008, a total of 25 herbicide demonstration plots were established in Malawi and Kenya, funds for which were provided by Monsanto, Dow, Bayer and FMC, a Belgian agro-chemicals company. "Herbicide products for the demo plots were selected by the herbicide companies," including Monsanto, which also supplied the maize seeds. The project document states that "the main objectives of the field days were to train the farmers on various maize varieties and the importance of growing hybrid varieties of maize" and that "field days have largely been a marketing tool for both the agro-dealers as well as the input suppliers because it has acted as a platform for promotion of different brands of agriculture technologies." In total, 848 demonstration plots were established in three regions of Malawi "to generate demand for yield-enhancing inputs among agro-dealers' farmer customers".

Training the agro-dealers on product knowledge has been carried out by the corporate suppliers of the products themselves. In addition, these agro-dealers are increasingly the source of farming advice

to small farmers, and an alternative to the government's agricultural extension service. A project evaluation report states that 44% of the agro-dealers in the programme were providing extension services.[27] Indeed, a World Bank report notes that:

The agro-dealers have…become the most important extension nodes for the rural poor… A new form of private sector driven extension system is emerging in these countries [Malawi, Kenya and Uganda] as the major agricultural input supply companies are increasingly conducting commercial demonstrations of new technologies in rural areas with rural stockists.[28]

The agro-dealer project in Malawi has been implemented by CNFA, a US-based organisation funded by USAID and DFID, and its local affiliate the Rural Market Development Trust (RUMARK), whose trustees include four seed and chemical suppliers: Monsanto, SeedCo, Farmers World and Farmers Association.[29] CNFA argues that "leveraging the power of private enterprise – from large multinational corporations to local input supply stores – is the best route to sustainable, market-based development solutions".[30] The organisation was "at the forefront of development in the early 1990s building free market systems in the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union".[31] CNFA's president and founder, John Costello, is a member of the US State Department's Advisory Committee for International Economic Policy.

Farming in central Malawi

Photo: ILRI / Mann

4. DFID and Unilever

Unilever is a UK / Dutch company established in the 1890s, which today sells 400 brands with a portfolio ranging from household care products to tea. Unilever is the world's largest tea company, with Lipton, the world's best selling brand, and PG Tips, the UK's number one tea. Consumers worldwide purchase 170 billion Unilever products each year, while the company buys up 12% of the world's black tea crop, 3% of its tomatoes, 3% of its palm oil and large quantities of onions, soya and rapeseed oil. Unilever says it has around 1.3 million smallholders linked into its supply chain. In 2011, Unilever's turnover was ⇔46.5 billion and its profits after tax totalled ⇔4.6 billion. Unilever has developed a "10-year strategy designed to enable the company to double in size". DFID is helping the company achieve this goal.[32]

In recent years, DFID has funded at least three projects in which Unilever was a corporate beneficiary: a tomato project in Ghana, a tea project in Kenya (benefitting Lipton, part of the Unilever group) and a nut project in Tanzania.[33] All three were funded by DFID's Business Linkages Challenge Fund, an initiative on which DFID spent £18.2 million during 2000-09. Currently, DFID is supporting a portable toilet project involving Unilever in Ghana[34] and a 'Sunrise' initiative with Unilever and Oxfam to source vegetables from farmers in Azerbaijan.[35] In March 2012, DFID launched a scheme in Bangladesh supporting women to sell Unilever products (along with those from Danone and Bata) ranging from shampoos and soaps to mobile phone packages and shoes.[36] Unilever CEO Paul Polman explains the value of engaging in such projects: "Doing so can open up new markets, lead to the development of new products and drive growth."[37]

DFID is working with Unilever in many other initiatives. One is the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, which DFID funds through the World Bank. Announced in Washington DC ahead of the G8 leaders' meeting in May 2012, the initiative involves 45 of the largest multinational corporations, including British businesses Unilever, Diageo and Vodafone investing $3 billion in African agriculture and signing up to a voluntary code of 'responsible investment' – a clear way of expanding the presence of agribusiness in African agriculture.[38] DFID is set to contribute a massive £395 million to the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition over the coming three years, including programmes in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Ghana and Mozambique.[39]

DFID also works with Unilever in another new pro-agribusiness initiative: Grow Africa. Grow Africa describes itself as "a partnership platform that seeks to accelerate investments and transformative change in African agriculture". It builds on public-private partnership models piloted by the World Economic Forum's New Vision for Agriculture, and "works to increase private sector investment in African agriculture by supporting partner countries in developing investment blueprints". Launched in January 2011, the New Vision for Agriculture is led by 28 global partner companies of the World Economic Forum which provide strategic leadership of the initiative, including Unilever, Monsanto and Kraft. Other partners read like a who's who of global agribusiness: ADM, BASF, Bayer, Bunge, Cargill, Coca-Cola, Diageo, DuPont, Louis Dreyfus Commodities, Maersk, Nestlé, PepsiCo, SABMiller, Syngenta, Mosaic, Vodafone, Wal-Mart and Yara. DFID and

Unilever are both Task Force members of Grow Africa, along with Syngenta, Diageo and Yara, among others.[40]

DFID works alongside Unilever in the Investment Climate Facility (ICF) for Africa, an initiative set up with DFID money in 2005 to "help bring about more business friendly policies, laws and regulations across the continent".[41] By August 2012, DFID had spent £17.9 million funding the ICF. Unilever, one of the ICF's corporate sponsors, also contributed $1 million over two years to the ICF, its press release noting: "We want to work with the ICF to lift the constraints that currently exist for business in terms of bureaucracy, capacity, finance and good business planning."[42] The ICF's first chair was Niall Fitzgerald, former CEO of Unilever from 1996 to 2004.

Unilever is a key player in the Southern Agricultural Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT), a project that comes out of the DFID-funded Grow Africa and New Vision for Agriculture initiatives. Launched at the World Economic Forum Africa in 2010, SAGCOT is a public-private partnership that aims to bring 350,000 hectares of land under agricultural production and to generate $2.1 billion of private sector investment in agriculture over 20 years. The project's founding partners include Unilever, Monsanto, Diageo, Syngenta, SABMiller, Yara, AGRA and DuPont. DFID joined with the EU and USAID in September 2012 to earmark funding for an upgrade of road infrastructure in the corridor – "the first component of a significant UK programme of support to SAGCOT", according to Diane Corner, British High Commissioner to Tanzania.[43]

SAGCOT states that it will benefit small farmers but, just as with the Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor project described later in this report, small farmers will be mainly outgrowers working for large agribusiness corporations. Indeed, SAGCOT project documents are explicit in affirming "the importance of incorporating smallholder farmers within commercial agriculture businesses".[44] It is also noteworthy that SAGCOT's investment blueprint defines small farmers as those with a turnover of less than $5,000 per year – 10 times more than most Tanzanian small farmers – suggesting that the project will mainly target larger farmers. The SAGCOT documents also make clear that the project will lobby for low taxes for investors, such as corporation tax holidays and exemptions from VAT and withholding tax.

The SAGCOT project's executive committee has been co-led by the Tanzanian Minister of Agriculture and a vice-president of Unilever, and delivered an investment blueprint for the corridor. The committee also established the SAGCOT Centre to coordinate and mobilise investments and partnerships in the corridor, and a Catalytic Fund to spur investments.[45] The Catalytic Fund for SAGCOT is managed by AgDevCo, a company with links to DFID as described later in this report.

Few companies exemplify better than Unilever the personal nexus of relations between the UK government and agribusiness. Nick Dyer, DFID's current Director of Policy, started his career in Unilever before joining DFID in 1990; prior to joining DFID's policy department, Dyer headed up DFID's programme in Malawi. Douglas Brew, Unilever's current External Affairs Director for Africa, spent nearly nine years at DFID as a Senior Adviser and Africa Regional Manager, joining the company in 2012 after being Head of Africa, Development and Humanitarian at the UK Representation to the EU. Unilever has also been represented by its retired Senior Vice President Jeroen A.

Bordewijk on the Programme Advisory Committee of the pro-GM DFID-funded HarvestPlus initiative, described below.

Unilever's board of directors is truly a revolving door from UK government cabinets. Three former Conservative ministers were until recently on the board as non-executive directors:

- Baroness Lynda Chalker, the former UK Minister for Overseas Development, was an advisory and then a non-executive director of Unilever from 1998 to 2007, and is currently a trustee of the Investment Climate Facility for Africa, of which Unilever is a corporate sponsor.

- Leon Brittan, now Baron Brittan of Spennithorne, a high-ranking Conservative minister in the 1980s and then European Commissioner, joined the Unilever board as a non-executive director in 2004.

- David Simon, now Baron Simon of Highbury, former UK trade minister and CEO of BP, also joined the board as a non-executive director in 2004.

On the current Unilever board as a non-executive director is Sir Malcolm Rifkind, the former Foreign Secretary, who is also a non-executive director of Adam Smith International, the consultancy created out of the right-wing Adam Smith Institute. Adam Smith International is an explicitly pro-privatisation consultancy that works to create "an enabling environment for market and business development and pro-poor growth". The company has for many years received substantial funding from DFID, and in the three years to March 2012 was paid over £113 million from the aid budget.[46]

Other current non-executive directors of Unilever also have connections to the government. Byron Grote, formerly at BP, was a member of the UK Business-Government Forum on Tax and Globalisation from 2008 to 2010, and Vice-Chairman of the UK government's Public Services Productivity Panel from 1998 to 2000. Paul Walsh, non-executive director of Unilever and also CEO of Diageo, is a member of the government's Business Advisory Group (described in more detail below) and an adviser to the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

Yet few business leaders can boast such close association with the UK government's international development effort as Unilever CEO Paul Polman, who has a personal interest in selling agro-chemicals (a key DFID policy) since he is also non-executive director of Dow Chemicals. Polman sits on the UN panel co-chaired by UK prime minister David Cameron, whose mandate is to determine the direction for international development in the period after 2015, the target date set for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Such a position affords Unilever a unique measure of influence, enabling the company to argue for more pro-corporate policies on a panel which has been widely criticised for failing to include any civil society representation.[47]

5. DFID and Syngenta

Syngenta, based in Switzerland, is one of the world's largest pesticide and seed companies, with more than 26,000 employees in over 90 countries. In 2010 Syngenta had sales of $11.6 billion, of which $8.9 billion came from herbicides, fungicides and insecticides and $2.8 million came from seeds. The company provided $1.4 billion in net income to its shareholders.[48] Syngenta is a leading proponent of genetically modified crops, and has been working to introduce its varieties of GM maize and bananas for many years.

Emerging markets are critical to Syngenta's profits. CEO Mike Mack said in 2011 that the company's sales "have almost doubled since Syngenta's creation ten years ago" and that "expansion has been particularly rapid in the emerging markets, which now account for almost 50% of our sales".[49] In May 2012, Syngenta announced a commitment "to build a $1 billion business in Africa over the next 10 years" since "Africa has become one of our strategic growth regions and our aspiration is to contribute to the transformation of African agriculture".[50] Syngenta's aim is, of course, to grow still further: "Our aim is to gain an average 0.5% market share across our combined businesses … and a continuous increase in the dividend."[51]

DFID works with Syngenta in several of the same initiatives as with Unilever, such as the New Vision for Agriculture, of which Syngenta is co-chair; Grow Africa, in which Syngenta is a Task Force member; and the Southern Agricultural Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT), of which Syngenta is a founding partner. DFID and Syngenta also work together in the HarvestPlus initiative, which DFID funds through its grant to the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). DFID contributed £154 million to CGIAR during 2008-12, including funding directed explicitly towards research into the development of new GM crops.[52] DFID's 2005 policy paper *Growth and poverty reduction: the role of agriculture*, which formally remains DFID policy, states: "Biotechnology has the potential to provide significant benefits for poor people", adding that this is "particularly true for Africa".[53] Ever since then, as this report shows, DFID has continued to fund research supporting the introduction of GM crops.

HarvestPlus, which is supported by Syngenta as well as by DFID, is an organisation "conducting preliminary research to determine what role transgenics [i.e. GM] can play in breeding biofortified crops".[54] HarvestPlus "seeks to reduce hidden hunger and provide micronutrients to billions of people" by using a process of biofortification to bring higher levels of micronutrients into key staple foods. One of its main projects has been GM rice, known as Golden Rice, which is claimed to tackle vitamin A deficiency in regions where rice is a staple food. Both the science and the politics behind Golden Rice have been repeatedly challenged over a period of more than 10 years.[55] Syngenta, which holds the rights to commercial exploitation of Golden Rice, sublicenses it for 'humanitarian' use by farmers on incomes of less than $10,000 a year.

DFID's support for GM research is *de facto* support for the 'big six' multinational corporations that lead the research and development of GM crops: Monsanto, Bayer,

Syngenta, BASF, Dow and DuPont. GM crops have been largely developed for global commodity markets served by large-scale farmers growing maize, soya and cotton.[56] There is little evidence that GM crops produce higher yields (their supposed rationale) but considerable evidence of the risks involved in reliance on GM technology – even before the furore in September 2012 caused by new research linking exposure to Monsanto's GM maize and Roundup herbicide with tumours in rats.[57] If small farmers use GM crops, they are locked into buying expensive seed from large corporations, as well as often needing to use more chemical pesticides. This has been shown to be a sure route to indebtedness and long-term poverty.[58]

One earlier DFID-funded project involved a partnership with Syngenta Bangladesh to promote pest management for rice farmers. The project documentation noted that it enabled partners "to assist Syngenta to assure quality, and promote the technology to farmers and policy makers" in the context of Syngenta holding a 70% share of the pesticide market in Bangladesh. The DFID project involved "providing training to Syngenta personnel, pesticide retailers affiliated to them, and their customers… in parallel with training of Syngenta marketing personnel and pesticide retailers". The project was "designed to transfer knowledge to Syngenta and their dealer network" and "to assist Syngenta to develop strategies for promoting pheromone products to a receptive farmer population in order to enable sustainable transfer of the technology into the market place."[59] Another DFID-funded project involved promoting transgenic (i.e. GM) resistance to pest damage. The project was "the first demonstration world-wide of a transgenic East African Highland banana" and "the results built on our first demonstration of any transgenic banana with a useful trait carried out in other work funded... by Syngenta".[60]

Syngenta is also a partner in the DFID-funded, pro-GM African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), described earlier in this report. In addition to its other GM trials, the AATF is carrying out field trials of GM bananas in Uganda based on original research conducted at Leeds University, which was funded by DFID and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council.[61] David Lawrence, former Head of Research and Development at Syngenta and now one of the company's non-executive directors, is a member of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, and also of the Industrial Biotechnology Leadership Team, another body advising the government on biotechnology policy. Lawrence was also a member of the Lead Expert Group advising the government on global agriculture policy, which wrote the influential Foresight report on *The Future of Food and Farming*.[62]

Syngenta also enjoys other personnel connections to the UK government. Andrew Bennett, a board member and former Executive Director of the Syngenta Foundation, was previously Director of Rural Livelihoods and Environment at DFID. He is also a board member of UK-based consultancy CABI, which receives £1.2 million DFID funding for its CABI Development Fund as part of DFID's contribution to the CGIAR.[63] The Chair of CABI, John Ripley, spent 35 years at Unilever, most recently as Head of Corporate Development. The Chair of Syngenta is Martin Taylor, former CEO of Barclays plc, who served as a member of the Independent Banking Commission established in June 2010 by Chancellor George Osborne.

6. DFID and Diageo

DIAGEO

UK-based Diageo is one of the world's largest brewing companies, employing over 20,000 people and with offices in 80 countries. Diageo in Africa comprises 13 breweries, producing a range of African beer brands along with whisky, gin and vodka. In the year to June 2012, Diageo recorded sales of £10.8 billion, providing profit to its shareholders of £1.9 billion. Emerging markets account for almost 40% of Diageo's business, and increased operating profit by 23% in 2012. The company notes that "Africa represents Diageo's largest group of emerging markets in terms of net sales".[64]

In its 2011 private sector strategy document, *The engine of development: The private sector and prosperity for poor people*, DFID boasted of its support for a Diageo project to replace imported barley with locally grown sorghum in its beer brewing operation in Cameroon. The money in question – a matched funding commitment of $250,000 – was provided through the Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF).[65]

The AECF is a $150 million private sector fund which supports agribusiness and large commercial farms, backed by some of the biggest names in development finance and hosted by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). Its aim is "to encourage private sector companies to compete for investment support for their new and innovative business ideas".[66] According to DFID, the AECF has 58 projects in 17 countries; DFID funds nine of these projects and jointly funds 29 others.[67]

The AECF's current director, Hugh Scott, was Senior Private Sector Development Adviser for sub-Saharan Africa for DFID, and prior to that worked with DFID in Kenya; he was also strategic adviser to the Chair of the Investment Climate Facility for Africa. DFID is also working with Diageo in the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, the Grow Africa initiative (in which Diageo is a member of the Task Force) and in the New Vision for Agriculture, on whose board Diageo sits. Diageo is also a founding partner of SAGCOT.

Paul Walsh has been Diageo's CEO since 2000; as noted above, he is also a non-executive director of Unilever, and acts as an adviser to the Department of Energy and Climate Change. Walsh is a member of the Business Advisory Group convened by David Cameron "from sectors of strategic importance to the UK to provide regular, high level advice on critical business and economic issues facing the country". The group is designed to function "as a sounding board through which Ministers can listen to and debate the concerns and priorities facing industry and can discuss the Government's economic and business policy". Members of the group include not only Diageo's Paul Walsh, but also the CEOs or Chairs of Sainsbury's, Tata, GlaxoSmithKline and BAE Systems. In addition, Diageo boasts among its non-executive directors Lord Davies of Abersoch, a former trade minister under the Labour government from 2009 to 2010 and previously a non-executive director of Tesco.

DFID LINKS TO LAND GRABBING

Photo: War on Want

The DFID-supported Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF) and Emerging Africa Infrastructure Fund (EAIF) are promoting at least two projects accused of land grabbing in Africa. According to DFID, "An example of positive impact on wider market system [sic] by an existing AECF supported initiative is Dominion Farms in Western Kenya. Through provision of expertise and nationwide supply of tilapia fingerlings, Dominion Farms has built the aquaculture market system in Kenya."[68] But Dominion Farms, a US-based company which leases 17,000 hectares of land in Kenya, has been accused of displacing thousands of people from their farmland, as well as polluting water and sickening farm animals; the company denies the allegations.

In Sierra Leone, the DFID-sponsored EAIF is funding a biofuels project by Addax Bioenergy, a subsidiary of the Addax & Oryx Group, to establish a sugar cane plantation on 10,000 hectares of land along with an ethanol refinery and a biomass power generation plant. This is the largest private sector investment in agriculture in Sierra Leone, through which Addax will export the ethanol to the EU. Recent reports criticise the project for taking over land currently used to grow staple foods, for poor consultation processes with local communities and for failing to deliver on promises to promote local economic development.[70] Addax, by contrast, states that "the project aims to become a model for sustainable development in Africa".[71] Addax has been given a range of tax incentives by the Sierra Leonean government, notably a 13-year exemption from payment of corporation tax and a tax stabilisation clause whereby any change in law will require the government to compensate the company for any revenue losses.[72]

DFID has also been accused of supporting a 'villagisation' programme in Ethiopia designed to remove 1.5 million people from their lands in order to make way for the introduction of commercial agriculture. Widespread human rights violations have been reported in the forced evictions that accompanied the resettlement programme, and DFID has acknowledged that there "may have been" human rights abuses committed.[73] DFID has also admitted that it provided support to the villagisation programme when approached by the Ethiopian government in February 2011, in the form of guidelines and "examples of good practice relating to resettlement and villagisation processes", but has denied the allegation that funds supplied by DFID to Ethiopia's Protection of Basic Services programme have been used in the resettlement process.[74] Lawyers have threatened legal action against the UK government over its connection with the human rights violations committed by Ethiopian soldiers carrying out the evictions.[75]

7. DFID and SABMiller

SABMiller is a UK-based company that is one of the world's leading brewers, with more than 200 beer brands and 70,000 employees in over 75 countries. The company recorded sales of $31.4 billion in 2012, and profits of $4.2 billion. SABMiller has a major presence in Africa, which provided over a third of its pre-tax earnings in 2012.[76]

SABMiller is a member of the New Vision for Agriculture and one of the founding partners of SAGCOT (see earlier in this report). It is also one of the investors in the Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor, a large agricultural investment project in Mozambique being funded by DFID to the tune of £6.5 million during 2010-15. A $20 million Catalytic Fund supported by DFID has been set up to make investments in agribusinesses engaging in the Beira Corridor, which include not only SABMiller but also Nestlé, Tata and Chiquita. The Beira Corridor website states that the Catalytic Fund "is an agribusiness start-up fund which will make refundable advances to start-up businesses to help 'kick start' commercially-viable agriculture in the Beira corridor region".[77]

Launched at the World Economic Forum, the Beira Corridor is an initiative of Grow Africa and the New Vision for Agriculture. Its aim is to establish the Beira Corridor in Mozambique "as a major new agricultural producing and processing region over the next 20 years", putting 190,000 hectares under irrigation.[78] The Beira Corridor project describes itself as a partnership between governments, private investors and donor agencies which aims to boost agricultural productivity in Mozambique and the wider region. According to DFID, the aim of the project is: "To catalyse economic activity and leverage in private sector investment leading to accelerated job creation and income generation in central Mozambique bringing additional benefits in terms of food security, increased productivity of rural farmers and communities".[79] Beira Corridor supporters include corporations such as Yara, Sun Biofuels, DuPont and Rio Tinto, plus donors including DFID, Norway, AGRA and the World Bank.

As with other cases of large-scale land grabs, the Beira Corridor project documents boast of "large tracts of unutilized land" for foreign investors that can be leased for 99 years at a rate of just $1 per hectare. Over 80,000 hectares have already been allocated to investors since 2007. Mining and biofuels projects are integral to the initiative, and project documents indicate that the main targets will be medium and large-scale farmers; smallholders are meant to benefit as outgrowers for the corporations, and will be supported "in the transition to modern farming" involving their increasing use of fertilizer and hybrid seeds.[80]

The Catalytic Fund for Beira, like that for the SAGCOT project in Tanzania, is managed by AgDevCo, a company based in London. AgDevCo describes itself as "a not-for-profit distribution agricultural development company operating in sub-Saharan Africa".[81] AgDevCo's Executive Director of Business Development, Chris Isaac, is a former economic adviser for DFID, while another Executive Director, Daniel Hulls, formerly worked at the Treasury. AgDevCo's Chair is Keith Palmer, who is also the founder Chair of the DFID-funded Emerging Africa Infrastructure Fund (EAIF); a founder board member of DFID-funded GuarantCo; and a founder and Chair of CEPA, a consultancy firm whose clients include the EAIF itself, the Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG) and the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) – all of which bodies are described in this report.

Among the "core supporters" of the Beira Corridor project being funded by DFID is

British mining corporation Rio Tinto, on whose board sits DFID non-executive director Vivienne Cox. Cox's biography describes her as the "lead independent director on the Ministerial Board of the Department for International Development", and she has remarkable personal business contacts, sitting also on the boards of BG Group (formerly British Gas), Pearson (owner of the *Financial Times*), Vallourec (a manufacturing company for the energy industry) and INSEAD (an elite business school with offices worldwide). She is also a former executive vice-president of BP, where she worked from 1981 to 2009. Rio Tinto is described as a "strategic partner" of AgDevCo and has "partnered with AgDevCo, the Government of Mozambique and the British Government to assist farmers in the vicinity of mines in Moatize, central Mozambique, to boost their crop yields for commercial food production".[82] Rio Tinto has recently gained access to Mozambique's large coal reserves through its acquisition of Australian mining company Riversdale, and has been negotiating with the Mozambican government to upgrade the country's infrastructure in order to facilitate the transportation of coal from Moatize to the coast.[83]

In June 2010, SABMiller won nearly $1 million funding from the Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF) to "introduce an innovative local sourcing model for cassava" through a local subsidiary; SABMiller will contribute $2 million through the partnership to match the funding provided by the AECF.[84] In addition to SAB Miller's cassava project, another AECF project is the Ghana Grains Partnership, which supports one of the world's largest fertilizer corporations, Yara, to supply chemical fertilizers to farmers, alongside the Dutch / Ghanaian company, Wienco, supplying pesticides. The project seeks to provide maize farmers with access to chemical fertilizer and seed, along with extension services. Project documentation notes that Yara conducts demonstration plots and trains the farmers on the use of fertilizer, while "Yara and Wienco have also jointly developed small plots within the communities to communicate the message of new inputs techniques and the financial implications of embracing new technology".[85] This model is being replicated in the Beira Corridor and SAGCOT projects.

8. The Mauritius connection

In addition to the millions of pounds of taxpayers' money being diverted through the aid budget to support some of the world's largest agribusiness corporations, several of the companies and investment funds being supported by DFID are incorporated in the secrecy jurisdiction of Mauritius. This means that UK aid to agribusiness is being routed through a known tax haven, allowing companies to avoid paying taxes that could be used by governments to support small farmers and genuine agricultural development.

The island of Mauritius, situated in the Indian Ocean to the east of Madagascar, set itself up as an offshore banking centre with help from the City of London in 1989. With tight secrecy and negligible tax rates, Mauritius acts as a 'conduit haven' for money flowing in and out of Africa and Asia. The island is also a favourite destination for corporations or wealthy individuals seeking to engage in the offshore activity of 'round-tripping', whereby money is routed through Mauritius before being returned to the country of origin under the guise of foreign investment. Around 40% of foreign investment into India is registered as coming from Mauritius – much of it ostensibly coming from just one building in the Mauritian capital Port Louis.[86]

DFID is the main sponsor of equity for the London-based Emerging Africa Infrastructure Fund (EAIF), established in 2002 and registered in Mauritius. A recent DFID report states that it has hitherto spent £102.5 million on the EAIF and plans to spend a further £100 million in the four years 2011-15.[87] According to DFID, the EAIF is "a public-private partnership providing long-term debt finance for the construction and development of private infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa".[88] It funds projects across a range of sectors including telecoms, transport, water, power and agribusiness. DFID has provided 67% of EAIF's capital, and since 2002 the EAIF has made commitments of $495 million to finance 26 projects.

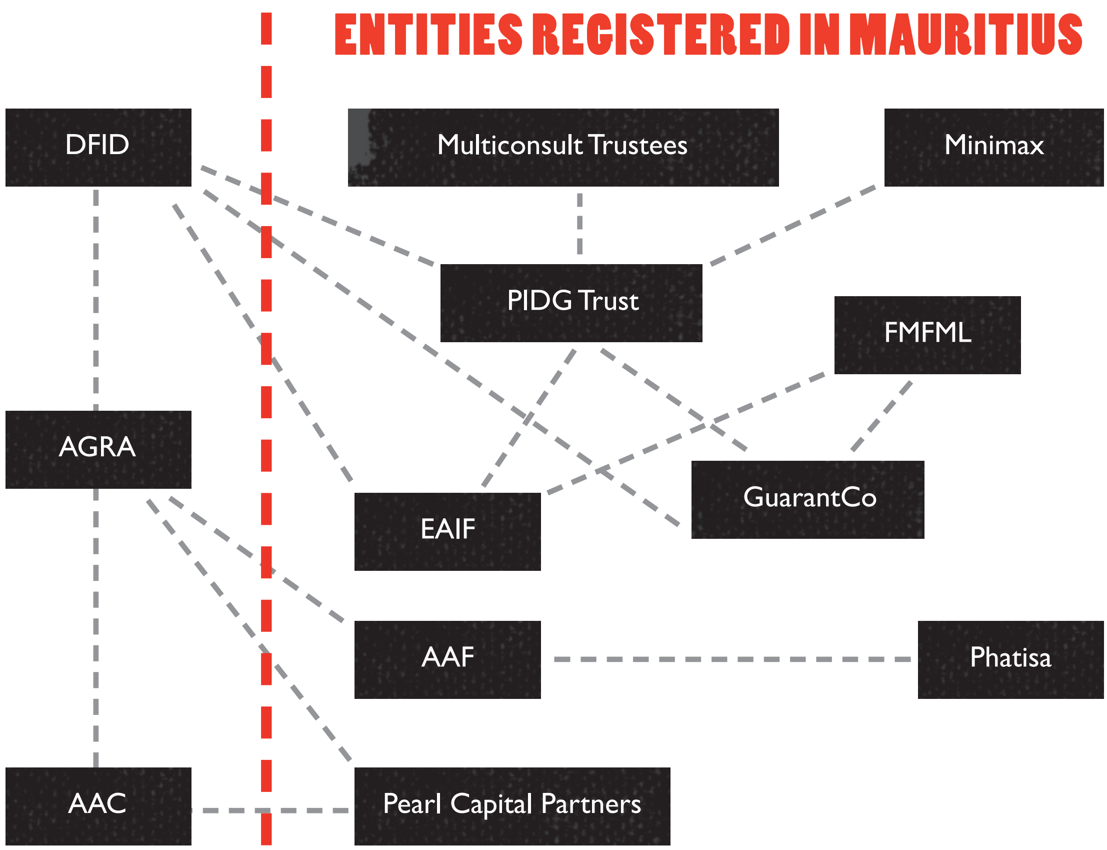
The EAIF is managed by a fund management company that is also incorporated in Mauritius: Frontier Markets Fund Managers Limited (FMFML).[89] DFID provides equity to the EAIF through the PIDG Trust, a Mauritian trust established in 2002 by the Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG) to mobilise private sector investment to infrastructure projects in the global South, including agribusiness. The PIDG launched the EAIF, which in turn acts as the debt provider to infrastructure projects established by the PIDG.[90] The PIDG Trust, which invests in, owns and manages the PIDG facilities, has two Mauritian professional trustee service providers: Multiconsult Trustees Ltd and Minimax Ltd.[91] DFID is one of the original members of the PIDG and states that the PIDG "plays a critical role to UK development objectives".[92] Indeed, DFID is providing a massive £459 million in core funding to the PIDG during 2012-15, a sum which could be increased "up to a possible £700 million, subject to performance".[93]

Another company registered in Mauritius and supported by DFID is GuarantCo.[94] Launched in 2006, GuarantCo is a sister entity to the EAIF and is owned indirectly by members of the PIDG through the PIDG Trust. It is also run by Frontier Markets Fund Managers Limited, the fund management company incorporated in Mauritius, as noted above. GuarantCo provides "credit enhancement to support long-term local currency lending in emerging markets by facilitating the financing of infrastructure in low income countries worldwide", and has completed eight transactions since 2006, providing $100 million of guarantees supporting projects worth $1.6 billion in countries such as Kenya,

Chad and India. The GuarantCo concept came from the PIDG, and DFID has provided $42 million in funding to GuarantCo, some through the PIDG Trust, with plans to spend £102 million in 2011-15.[95]

The DFID-funded Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is also closely linked to companies incorporated in Mauritius. The African Agriculture Fund (AAF), a special initiative of AGRA, is a company incorporated in Mauritius.[96] The AAF "supports private agricultural companies and cooperatives that implement strategies to increase and diversify agricultural production in Africa and reduce risks from volatility in commodity prices" and aims to grow to a size of €500 million.[97] The AAF is run by Phatisa Fund Managers, a subsidiary of Phatisa Group Ltd, also incorporated in Mauritius. Phatisa is also involved in the Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor project being funded by DFID, as described earlier in this report.[98]

AGRA has also had a long relationship with Pearl Capital Partners, a specialist agriculture investment firm that has invested in small and medium-sized East African agribusinesses since 2006.[99] While it has offices in Kampala and Nairobi, the company is licensed in Mauritius. Pearl Capital's Managing Partner is Tom Adlam, formerly chief financial officer of the UK government's CDC Group's African agro-industries investment portfolio. As head of Pearl Capital, Adlam is also managing director of African Agricultural Capital (AAC), a fund which has had a long relationship with AGRA through the African Seed Investment Fund, also managed by Pearl Capital.[100] According to DFID, AAC is one of the investment funds acting as a co-funder on initiatives with the Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund.[101]



9. Conclusion

This report has traced how the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID) is spending hundreds of millions of pounds of taypayers' money in order to expand corporate control over agriculture in Africa. At the same time as vast tracts of African farm land are being handed over to private investors, DFID is seeking to bring millions of African farmers under the control of the world's largest agribusiness companies through increased dependency on corporate seeds and chemicals and through their transformation into outgrowers for private sector investment initiatives. In some instances, such as the Malawi case study featured in this report, agricultural extension projects funded by DFID are the sole means by which corporations are able to penetrate these new markets. The fact that much UK aid to agribusiness is being routed through the tax haven of Mauritius adds further insult to injury.

DFID is using the UK aid budget to drive forward the privatisation of African agriculture, denying people's right to control their own food production. Rather than meeting DFID's mandate of poverty reduction, this pro-corporate agenda threatens to deepen hunger and poverty among rural populations into the long-term future. There is an urgent need to halt DFID's support for the corporate takeover of African agriculture before irreversible damage is done.

DFID's promotion of agribusiness is an integral part of its 'food security' agenda, which argues that the world's food needs will be assured through greater private sector control over the global food system as a whole. That agenda is kept alive in turn by a revolving door of appointments and personal connections that ensure DFID remains close to the companies that benefit from its assistance. Yet the crisis in the global food system has revealed the need for alternative models of food production, distribution and consumption that guarantee communities control over their own natural resources, strengthen local and national markets and promote agroecological production methods. These positive alternatives come together under the framework of food sovereignty as developed by the worldwide farmers' movement La Vía Campesina and described in full in War on Want's report *Food Sovereignty: Reclaiming the global food system*.

War or Want believes that:

- DFID should suspend its support for initiatives promoting land grabbing by multinational corporations and agricultural extension activities involving the sale of corporate seeds and chemical inputs to small-scale farmers. In their place, DFID should respond to the call from Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, who has urged all states to promote the model of agroecology in their plans to reduce poverty and climate change.
- DFID should suspend its funding for research into GM crops. Instead, DFID should support agricultural research focused on sustainable, low-input and traditional breeding programmes developed by small-scale farmers around the world.
- DFID should take immediate action to ensure that UK aid funds are not routed through Mauritius or any other tax havens or secrecy jurisdictions. DFID should make a comprehensive public declaration detailing the full extent of all initiatives and investment funds connected with the UK aid budget, and where each is registered, irrespective of sector.

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Written by Mark Curtis and John Hilary

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Cover picture: DFID
David Cameron speaking in London, July 2012

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