



4 April 2018
Rome, Italy

Agro-Industry influence is key barrier to agroecology

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is hosting the 2nd Global Symposium on Agroecology this week in Rome, Italy. [Pesticide Action Network \(PAN\) International](#) has 10 delegates from nine countries at the Rome meeting, with all five PAN Regional Centers represented (Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America, Europe and North America).

PAN supports the widespread adoption of agroecology, which integrates cutting edge science with local and indigenous knowledge and practices. This is a priority for PAN because the people who make up the global network — peasants and family farmers, especially including women, as well as indigenous communities, farmworkers and rural families — are on the frontlines of harm from the chemical pesticides that are the cornerstone of industrial food and farming.

On behalf of the international [Pesticide Action Network](#), PAN North America’s senior scientist Dr. Marcia Ishii-Eiteman made the following plenary statement at the close of Tuesday’s session:

“We’ve heard powerful statements today about agroecology in the context of food sovereignty, and that people and nature form the basis of agroecology. We’ve also heard that we need to broaden democratic space for farmers and civil society, with policy support needed from FAO, donors and governments. We fully agree.

In this context, we need to be explicit about the greatest obstacle facing the scaling up of agroecology, which we haven’t talked about much yet: the power and influence of transnational corporations over public policy, research, extension and markets – especially the multinational pesticide, seed and chemical corporations that are directly blocking or subverting agroecology, or attempting to co-opt it.

The more visible and widespread agroecology becomes, the bigger this industry backlash will be. Because—let’s be honest—agroecology poses a tremendous threat, not only to the ongoing sale of pesticides and GMO seeds, but even more fundamentally to corporate power over food and farming systems globally.

So when we talk about actions to scale up agroecology these next few days, let’s also talk about concrete legal, legislative and other national and international policy mechanisms to restrain or dismantle these corporations, and how FAO, government delegates and other participants here can contribute to the necessary pushback against the ongoing corporatization of agriculture.

The global community also must commit to providing meaningful protection to peasant farmers and rural communities who are practicing agroecology, and who often face extremely violent backlash and oppression — by state and other actors — for doing just that.”

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