

## Gates Foundation and Cargill Pushing Soya in Africa

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The Gates Foundation and Cargill push Soya onto Africa

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Cape Town – The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is to grant US\$8 million to develop a soya value chain in Africa, in partnership with US non-profit organisation TechnoServe and agricultural commodity trading giant Cargill. The announcement was made at the Soy Innovation Africa Conference held in Cape Town 26th and 27th August 2010.

The project is meant to run for four years, commencing initially in Mozambique and Zambia where it is aimed at 37 000 small-scale farmers. The model will be replicated in other regions at a later time.

The ACB has released a report titled “The Gates Foundation and Cargill push Soya onto Africa” wherein it argues that the Gates project is aimed at enabling commodities giant, Cargill, to capture a hitherto untapped African soya market and eventually introduce GM soya onto the continent where reception to GMOs remains chilly.

Soya is sought after by the rapidly expanding global livestock and agrofuels sectors. Currently Africa produces less than 1% of global soya, while the USA, Brazil and Argentina dominate the market. Cargill is the biggest global player in the production and trade in soya, with heavy investments in Latin America where genetically modified (GM) soya monocrops have displaced rural populations and caused environmental devastation. It was estimated that in the 2004/2005 growing season in Brazil, 1.2 million hectares of the Amazon rainforest was deforested as a consequence of soya expansion.

Approximately 93% of soya production in the USA is GM, 98.9% in Argentina and 70.7% in Brazil. It is therefore likely that there will be great pressure on Africans to accept GM seeds under the Gates project. Mozambique has already opened the door to GM soya commodities, accepting a shipment of 35,000 MT of GM soya beans from South Africa this year. This is the first such permit authorised by the Executive Council in South Africa.

Researcher for the African Centre for Biosafety, Haidee Swanby, said, “the Gates Foundation continues to back agricultural strategies in Africa that open new markets for the benefit of foreign agribusiness through the establishment of agribusiness value chains and favourable policies.”

Mariam Mayet, Director of the ACB slams the project as an “attempt at yoking African farmers into the soya value chain and displacing African agricultural practices and traditional crops.”