‘JUNK AGROECOLOGY’:

THE CORPORATE CAPTURE OF AGROECOLOGY FOR A PARTIAL ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION WITHOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL, TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTE AND CROCEVIA

APRIL | 2020

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Friends of the Earth International

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In memory of our dear friend and colleague Stéphane Parmienter. ***Your commitment to the struggle for an agroecology rooted in social and environmental justice will continue to inspire us.***

Authors: Alberto Alonso-Fradejas, Lyda Fernanda Forero, Delphine Ortega-Espès, Martín Drago and Kirtana Chandrasekaran. **Translation:** REDES-AT. **Editor:** Katie Sandwell. **Acknowledgments:** We wish to thank the following colleagues for their valuable inputs and feedback: Peter Rosset (El Colegio de la Frontera Sur, México); Anna Korzenszky; and Mauro Conti (Crocevia). **Cover image:** © Nicolás Medina, Real World Radio, Redes/ Amigos de la Tierra Uruguay. **Design:** www.onehemisphere.se.

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INTRODUCTION

Agroecology as a science, practice and social movement (Wezel *et al.*, 2009), and especially as a way of living (Nyéléni, 2015, p. 3), has come into style beyond its traditional scientific, political, productive and consumption circles.

In the context of the food, environmental, climate, energy and financial/economic crises, the need to transform the unsustainable agrifood and resource-use system is evident in the debates and declarations of the intergovernmental organisations in charge of biodiversity,[1] food & agriculture[2] governance, and governing the fight against climate change.[3] In 2014, FAO called on different actors to participate in the first of a series of official events, at the global and international level, focusing on agroecology.[4] The following year, 'international movements of small-scale food producers and consumers, including peasants, indigenous peoples and communities (together with hunters and gatherers), family farmers, rural workers, herders and pastoralists, fisherfolk and urban people' (Nyéléni, 2015) and allied organisations met at the International Forum for Agroecology in Nyéléni, Mali. Their goal was 'to come to a common understanding of agroecology as a key element in the construction of Food Sovereignty and to develop joint strategies to promote Agroecology and defend it from co-optation' (Nyéléni 2015, 1).

Peoples' organisations that are part of the Nyéléni Forum state that 'agroecology is political', and 'it requires us to challenge and transform structures of power in society. We need to put the control of seeds, biodiversity, land and territories, waters, knowledge, culture and the commons in the hands of the peoples who feed the world' (2015, 4). Moreover, the participants of the Forum identified efforts aiming at the 'co-optation of agroecology to fine-tune the industrial food system' under the names 'climate smart agriculture', 'sustainable-' or 'ecological intensification', industrial monocultural production of 'organic' food, etc. (Nyéléni 2015, 2). This is why the organisations that participated in the Nyéléni Forum agree that these practices are not agroecology: 'we reject them, and we will fight to expose and block this insidious appropriation of agroecology' (2015, 2). To this end, one of the nine strategies agreed during the Forum is to 'denounce and fight corporate and institutional capture of agroecology' (Nyéléni 2015, 7).

Harvesting soy in the state of Mato Grosso, Brazil.
© Kelvin Helen Haboski / Shutterstock

1 After the 14th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, the Executive Secretariat of the CBD raised that 'This will require work at the nexus of biodiversity, climate change, food and water, agriculture and health among other sectors and issues, considering trade-offs among these areas and related policy options regarding sustainable production and consumption, pollution and urbanization.' (CDB, 2018, p. 5)

2 The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) stated that agroecology has great potential for global agriculture (IAASTD, 2009, pp. 67, 186). A consultation process that involved 900 participants and 110 countries worldwide between 2005 and 2007, and under the sponsorship of FAO, GEF, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, the World Bank and WHO, the IAASTD was the key official mechanism for assessing agricultural knowledge, science and technology in order to: i) reduce hunger and poverty; ii) improve rural food, health and livelihoods; and iii) facilitate social and environmental sustainability.

3 The Paris Agreement, reached by the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015, establishes the need to increase ' the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production' (CMNUCC, 2015, p. 3, art. 2 b).

4 After a series of regional seminars in 2015 and 2016, the FAO organized in 2018 the 2nd International Symposium on Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition.

In the current search for answers to the global socio-ecological crises, like those presented in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, sustainable agriculture[5] is a key tool for the transformation of the dominant agrifood and resource-use system, which underlies the crisis. However, it is yet unclear, and thus a matter of discussion and dispute, who will decide what kind of sustainable agriculture will be privileged for what type of agrifood and natural resource use, and who will be the key socio-economic subject of this change. Will it be those who have been working for decades for an agroecology that is emancipatory from and transformative of the unjust socio-ecological relations typical of the existing corporate agrifood system? Those who continue working in line with the vision of agrarian, environmental and climate justice, embedded in food sovereignty? Or instead those who are currently approaching agroecology in search of tools to mitigate the worst environmental impacts of the industrial agro-food system? Those seeking a transition to a somewhat greener system, but one still plagued by inequality and social injustice?

These are precisely the questions that have inspired this collaborative work between Friends of the Earth International (FoEI), Centro Internazionale Crocevia (CIC) and the Transnational Institute (TNI). In particular, aiming to contribute to the discussion of these questions, we explore in this report why and especially how corporate agrifood interests, which used to consider agroecology a threat, are today strategically and selectively taking over some of its discourses, techniques and practices.

Below left:
Hydroponic organic vegetables.
© MiniStocker / Shutterstock

Below right:
Local farmers' market in Guamote, Chimborazo province, Ecuador.
© Robert Gibson z / Shutterstock

5 In addition to plant cultivation, under the general notion of 'agroecology' we include fisheries, agroforestry, livestock activities, all of them with multiple potential ends (food, energy, industrial, carbon capture, etc.).

TWO PATHS, ONE DESTINATION? AGROECOLOGY & SUSTAINABLE

INTENSIFICATION OF AGRICULTURE IN THE TRANSITION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FOOD, AGRICULTURAL & RESOURCE-USE SYSTEMS

01

Removing husks from coconuts in Jembrana, Bali, Indonesia.
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In July 2019 the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE), which advises the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), published a report on 'Agroecological approaches and other innovations for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition'(HLPE, 2019). In this report, which confirms and substantiates many positions held for decades by social movements for agroecology and their allies, the HLPE states that: ***This report describes several innovative approaches to sustainable food systems and clusters them in two main categories: (i) sustainable intensification of production systems and related approaches (including climate-smart agriculture, nutrition-sensitive agriculture and sustainable food value chains) that generally involve incremental transitions towards sustainable food systems; and (ii) agroecological and related approaches (including organic agriculture, agroforestry and permaculture) that some stakeholders consider to be more transformative. (HLPE, 2019, p. 15).***

The differences between these two competing approaches are multiple and important. While the Sustainable Intensification approach ***'starts from a premise that [...] productivity per unit of land needs to increase in a sustainable manner, which is what is meant by sustainable intensification, [agroecology] emphasizes reducing inputs and fostering diversity alongside social and political transformation focused on improving ecological and human health and addressing issues of equity and governance' (HLPE, 2019, p. 15).*** For our purposes it is important to give a brief introduction to how we understand these divergent paths, and what type of changes in the current agrifood and resource-use system each of them proposes.

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THE AGROECOLOGICAL APPROACH

The way the Food Sovereignty movement currently understands agroecology is reflected in the Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology celebrated in 2015 in Nyéléni, Mali. Agroecology is a way of living in harmony with nature and is based on the principles of social and environmental justice. Under this view, and based on the dialogue in both knowledge and solidarity among communities, peoples and regions around the world, agroecology is a key tool for building food sovereignty and cooling the planet; this is true in both in scientific-technical and political terms (Nyéléni, 2015).[6] The emancipatory and transformative interpretation of agroecology advanced by the Nyéléni Forum is echoed, to a certain extent, in the HLPE report.

Agroecology as a science, practice and social movement

As a **science**, agroecology is: (i) the integrative study of the ecology of the entire food system, encompassing ecological, economic and social dimensions, in brief, the ecology of the food system (Francis *et al*., 2003); (ii) the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable food systems (Gliessman, 2007); and, more recently, (iii) the integration of research, education, action and change that brings sustainability to all components of the food system: ecological, economic and social (Gliessman, 2018).

Agroecological **practices** aim at improving agroecosystems by harnessing natural processes, creating beneficial biological interactions and synergies among their components (Gliessman, ed., 1990) and using, in the best way, ecological processes and ecosystem services for the development and implementation of production practices (Wezel *et al*., 2014).

As a **social movement**, agroecology is seen as a solution to current challenges such as climate change and malnutrition, contrasting with the so-called "industrial" model and transforming it to build locally relevant food systems that strengthen the economic viability of rural areas based on short marketing chains, and fair and safe food production. It supports diverse forms of small-scale food production and family farming, farmers and rural communities, food sovereignty, local knowledge, social justice, local identity and culture, and indigenous rights over seeds and breeds (Altieri and Toledo, 2011; Rosset *et al*., 2011; Nyéléni, 2015) (This dimension of agroecology as a political movement is becoming increasingly prominent (Gonzalez de Molina, 2013; Toledo and Barrera-Bassols, 2017).

Source: HLPE, 2019, p. 32.

THE 'SUSTAINABLE INTENSIFICATION' OF AGRICULTURE APPROACH (SI)

In theory, the sustainable intensification of agriculture (SI) comprises 'agricultural processes or systems in which production is maintained or increased while progressing toward substantial enhancement of environmental outcomes. It incorporates these principles without the cultivation of more land and loss of unfarmed habitats and with increases in system performance that incur no net environmental cost.'. (Pretty, 2018 With this purpose, it is essential that SI does not 'prescribe specific, concretely defined technologies or practices' (Pretty, 1997, p. 249), or in other words that 'No techniques or technologies should be ruled out' (Royal Society, 2009, p. ix). A priori, then, sustainable intensification could be understood as a component, or a partial goal, of the agroecological approach in certain contexts.

However, the HLPE argues that in practice, those who advocate for the SI approach 'privilege technological and productivity-oriented innovations in order to improve resource efficiency while reducing the negative environmental and health impacts of current food systems' (HLPE, 2019, p. 61). Therefore, it is not strange that the 'father' of the SI concept himself recognises that: 'some controversy surrounds the SI term. Does the term imply no more than business as usual? Is it a vehicle to smuggle into agriculture potentially harmful technologies? Will it lead to losses of productivity as environmental goods are prioritized?' (Pretty, 2018). Effectively, as Friends of the Earth International notes in its analysis of SI: ***By excluding nothing the concept has become a catch-all, and is used to endorse existing policies.[7] It has been adopted by organizations representing the biotechnology, pesticide and fertilizer industries. And by focusing on increasing yield, sustainable intensification fails to address the political and economic issues that prevent millions of people from having access to safe and nutritious food. From this perspective, sustainable intensification seems more like business as usual than a radical change in direction. Nevertheless, definitions of sustainable intensification do include agro-ecological approaches (Collins and Chandrasekaran, 2012, p. 7, emphasis added).***

We have, therefore, two different paths that are built, used and promoted by socio-economic actors of a radically opposing nature, which also lead to differing destinations, although they share some similar elements of the landscape. The question for discussion is thus whether it will be agroecology or the sustainable intensification of agriculture (SI) in its more limited form, at the service of agribusiness, which will set the tone and receive the necessary political and financial support. Aiming to contribute to this discussion, and based on a position that considers a transition towards a green-washed agrifood and natural resource-use system, which is unjust and unsustainable from an ecosystem point of view, is like trying to put a band-aid on a broken finger, we analyse below a series of initiatives. These promote a limited, partial, and specific model of sustainable intensification of agriculture, with some agroecological nuances.

6 See also report by Friends of the Earth International on Agroecology: innovations for sustainable food systems and agriculture (Ortega-Espés, 2018), at: https://www.foei.org/resources/publications/agroecology-innovating-for-sustainable-food-systems-and-agriculture and Issue 101 dated July 2019 in Revista Biodiversidad Sustento y Culturas on 'Peasant Agroecology' at: https://www.grain.org/system/categories/pdfs/000/000/560/original/Definitiva-Biodiversidad%20101%20WEB.pdf

7 For instance, SI is 'Strategic Objective A' or 'one of the principal responses to anticipated growing demands for food and other agricultural products'. (FAO, 2019).

SI, NVA AND FOLU: THREE INITIATIVES BY BIG AGRIFOOD CAPITAL ADVANCING 'JUNK AGROECOLOGY'

02

Woman farmer holding black beans.
© Davide Bonaldo / Shutterstock

As mentioned above, we aim to explore the motives for and means through which the corporations that dominate the agrifood and natural resource-use system seek to partially redress the inequality, poverty, hunger, malnutrition, violence and environmental destruction that their business model has generated during the past century. To this end, we analyse three major public-private initiatives that promote a limited and partial version of the sustainable intensification of agriculture (SI) approach:

1. The Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI),

2. The New Vision for Agriculture (NVA) and

3. The New Food and Land Use Economy Coalition (FOLU).

There are indeed other relevant initiatives, but they either adopt more specific approaches, as in the case of the 'Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture' (GACSA),[8] or they are smaller initiatives in terms of scope, like the 'Global Agribusiness Alliance'.[9] Further, these three global initiatives display a broad range of interests, positions and discourses. They range from an initiative driven almost exclusively by the main transnational corporations in the agrifood system (SAI) to one that is portrayed as a scientific initiative (FOLU), through a 'halfway' initiative that includes the largest and most diverse membership (NVA).

8 http://www.fao.org/gacsa/about/en/
9 https://globalagribusinessalliance.com/

02

Formal differences aside, SAI, NVA and FOLU operate under similar logics and with similar goals. The three initiatives are a clear example of pre-competitive collaboration between big corporations, aimed at promoting and influencing public-private governance spaces where multiple stakeholders participate ('multi-stakeholder spaces'). Also, all of them claim to contribute to the achievement of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the 2030 Agenda and its associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). And, while each initiative has particular objectives, all are governed by a shared mission that is exquisitely summarised in the 'African Green Revolution Forum' (AGRF[10]) 's 2018 slogan: 'Enabling new pathways to turn smallholders into sustainable agribusinesses' (AGRF, 2018, p. 1). The guiding logic of the initiatives was likewise summarised by then-CEO of Unilever (until June 2019), and key member of all three initiatives (see below):

multinational companies can and must use their extended supply chains to drive change and improve the quality of life in the markets where they operate [...] This may sound daunting, but we already have a framework to guide the transition: The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs [...] are designed to achieve a 'more sustainable future for all' by 2030, which, by extension, will enable a better business environment. The Business and Sustainable Development Commission has estimated that meeting the SDGs could add some $12 trillion and 380 million jobs to the global economy by the end of the next decade (Polman, 2019).[11]

Moreover, SAI, NVA and FOLU share the same political vision. To this end, and as we will discuss in detail below, the three initiatives promote a limited model of 'sustainable agricultural intensification with agro-ecological nuances'. In short, they advance a 'limited innovation' approach, which seeks to mitigate the worst environmental and social impacts of the current industrial agrifood and natural resource-use system, but without transforming the unjust socio-economic, ideological, political and ecological relations on which this system is built. As the World Economic Forum states, what is sought is an 'update of the current operating system', rather than a structural transformation (WEF, 2019b, p. 4). Thus, SAI, NVA and FOLU deploy their substantial powers in influencing media, politics and markets to freely shape the social and political imaginary regarding desirable and possible changes in the current agrifood and natural resource use system.

As we will see, the SAI, NVA and FOLU initiatives claim to pursue environmental sustainability; the reduction of poverty, hunger and malnutrition; and the 'inclusion' of family and small-scale agricultural producers in global value chains. However, evidence suggests that the ultimate goal of its limited model of sustainable agricultural intensification with agroecological nuances is, at best, to reproduce the ecological-productive base that is strictly necessary for large agrifood capital to continue profiting at the expense of the planet and its population.[12] In other words, to introduce essential reforms required to safeguard the current corporate agrifood and industrial natural resource use system from itself. As the Business and Sustainable Development Commission established by the World Economic Forum states: 'the costs and uncertainty of unsustainable development can increase to the point where there may be no viable world to do business in.' (BSDC, 2017, pp. 14).

For the purposes of 'changing everything so that nothing changes', big transnational agrifood corporations find, in agroecology, a menu of extremely useful solutions that they can selectively integrate into their existing model, which is highly dependent on external inputs. That is why we say that this does not entail a complete assimilation of the agroecological approach and its vision of food sovereignty by big agrifood capital. This would be like trying to mix water and oil. Rather, agrifood capital is engaged in selective but strategic corporate capture of some of the goals, discourses and practices of agroecology,[13] and of the political space and funds available for the transition to sustainable agriculture. In short, we are witnessing the development of a 'junk' version of agroecology. Just as the kind of food that is typical of the agro-industrial model is described as 'junk food', sustainable agricultural intensification with agro-ecological nuances can be understood as the 'junk' version of agro-ecology.

In their crusade for a 'junk agroecology' that transfigures and misuses the efforts of millions of agricultural producers, scientists, social organisations and national and international institutions that practice and promote an agroecology faithful to the principles of social justice and harmony with nature, SAI, NVA and FOLU share three obsessions. The first is a technological-productivist obsession, the second is with global value chains and the market, and the third is with a model of private governance driven by the rationale that 'you are worth as much as you own'. In the following, we will describe these three obsessions in more detail, and then move on to discuss the nature and particular interests involved in each, and the ways in which each of these three global initiatives promotes a model of junk agroecology.

10 The AGRF is a joint initiative led by the main partners of NVA, FABLE-FOLU and SAI. See https://agrf.org/

11 It should be noted, however, that the BSDC does not make clear who will benefit from this wealth, nor how many jobs (including those considered "green") may be lost in a "green transition" carried out in the service of capital. An informative example can be found in the labor paradox generated by the current expansion of monocultures, including allegedly labor-intensive ones like sugar cane and oil palm. In Guatemala, for example, the expansion of sugarcane and palm agribusinesses has led to a large net loss of agricultural jobs. This is because the new jobs in cane or palm plantations do not compensate, by far, for the jobs lost due to the replacement of family and small-scale agriculture by sugarcane and palm agribusinesses (Alonso-Fradejas, 2013).

12 This dynamic, characterized by James O'Connor as the 'second contradiction of capitalism' refers to how 'capital limits itself by impairing its own social and environmental conditions hence increasing the costs and expenses of capital, thereby threatening capitals' ability to produce profits' (O'Connor, 1988, p. 13).

13 For a more detailed discussion of the inclusion of agroecological elements in the model of sustainable agricultural intensification see, among other sources: FAO (2011, 2013), Holt-Giménez y Altieri (2013), Parmentier (2014), Giraldo y Rosset (2016), Rosset y Altieri (2017), Ortega-Espés (2018), and GANESAN (2019).

SAI, NVA & FOLU: THREE MAJOR INITIATIVES & THREE MAJOR OBSESSIONS

OF AGRIFOOD CAPITAL FOR CHANGING SO THAT EVERYTHING STAYS THE SAME

03

Tractor spraying crops.
© Valentin Valkov / Shutterstock

THE TECHNOLOGICAL-PRODUCTIVIST OBSESSION

Sustainable intensification of agriculture with agroecological nuances, as promoted by SAI, NVA and FOLU, is based on the ideological pillars of productivism and technological determinism. The first seeks to legitimise big agrifood capital's interest in increasing, to the greatest possible extent, the productivity of agricultural land and agricultural labour[14] with the neo-Malthusian argument that there is a need to 'feed an increasing global population on the basis of diminishing pool of productive resources' (WEF, 2013, p. 6). Global population growth and, most importantly, increasing urbanisation are realities that entail multiple and important challenges. However, it is no less true that the more than 800 million people suffering from hunger today are victims of the unjust global distribution of access to food, not a global lack of food availability.

However, for the big agrifood capital of the world, in control of global agricultural commodity supply chains, the solution to a socio-ecological problem as complex as feeding the world's population seems to be limited to the need to produce 'more with less'. The strategy to achieve this is clear, and consists in advancing technological innovation in the service of the existing, unjust, industrial agrifood system. Beyond the technological determinism that entails pretending to solve historical-structural problems exclusively in a lab or with 'a click,' and despite certain words of caution by research organisations linked to FOLU and NVA, the three initiatives reduce innovation to new technologies and processes subject to intellectual property rights or other types of obstacles for their dissemination (e.g. institutional affiliation, etc.). Among these are, as discussed further below, the development of new gene editing technologies (e.g. CRISPR), precision agriculture to reorganise biophysical farm processes as factory assembly lines and the digitalisation of farming production processes, and their socio-ecological contexts, to obtain, analyse and share information in real time (i.e. Big Data). The SAI, NVA and FOLU argue that the sophistication presupposed by this type of agriculture will root youth in the countryside, so that new generations will take the leadership of technological input-intensive agricultural production.

However, as expressed by Friends of the Earth International (FoEI), innovation in agrifood and land-use systems 'also entails the adaptation or evolution, and the substantial improvement and/or expansion, of already existing techniques and practices'. (Ortega-Espés, 2018, p. 6). With this more comprehensive view, FoEI proposes '13 interconnected core evaluation criteria to (...) better assess and select an innovation (...) considered socially, culturally, environmentally, politically and economically acceptable: i) Participatory governance; ii) Social and economic justice; iii) Eradication of hunger; iv) Health, nutrition and safety; v) Small-scale

03

food producers' and workers' benefits; vi) Gender justice and diversity; vii) Effectiveness; viii) Energy justice; ix) Environmental justice; x) Climate justice; xi) Availability and affordability; xii) Usability and time sustainability and xiii) Scalability' (Ortega-Espés, 2018, p. 7). In other words, 13 criteria that emphasise agroecological innovation under the transformative vision of food sovereignty.

THE OBSESSION WITH NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

SAI, NVA and FOLU's members' adoption of the limited model of sustainable intensification of agriculture with agroecological nuances, in order to reproduce the ecological-productive basis on which their businesses rely, is motivated by the new profit opportunities offered by the current imperatives of sustainability and inclusion in 'global value chains'.

On the one hand, the big agrifood capital behind SAI, NVA and FOLU seeks to take advantage of business opportunities resulting from the 'green economy'. As argued by the financial giant Rabobank, a member of both NVA and FOLU, 'businesses in food and agriculture and other sectors that look at raw materials, production methods and recycling from a fresh angle can both achieve new earning models and help conserve raw materials and natural resources' (Rabobank, 2019, own translation).

On the other hand, under the corporate agrifood and resource-use global system, small-scale food producers have two options: to join global value chains or to disappear. This is why the promotion of inclusive business models, including various models of contract agriculture, is important not only in SAI, NVA and FOLU, but also in larger plans like the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In theory, inclusive business models, such as the different contract farming models, imply the sharing of benefits among all actors in global agricultural commodity chains. But, in reality, and regardless of the benefits certain non-privileged actors may receive, these models lead to the consolidation of corporate control over these supply chains. This dynamic is legitimised on the basis of two ideological principles. Firstly, it relies on free market rhetoric which is both reductionist (e.g. focused on certain highly valuable crops) and distorted (i.e. imputing perfect competition to oligopolistic markets like those for agricultural inputs, or the processing, transport and distribution of food and other agricultural products). Secondly, it relies on a vision that sees the impoverishment of small farmers as residual rather than structural (Bernstein, 2010). That is, it is understood that these producers are poor because they are excluded from opportunities to access financial markets, land markets, commodity markets, labour markets, etc.), and not because of the terms of their inclusion in these markets, which result from the position that they occupy in the social hierarchy of classes. That is why SAI, NVA and FOLU focus on the principle of 'inclusion', but not on 'redistribution'.

THE OBSESSION WITH A NEW PUBLIC-PRIVATE GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR THE AGRIFOOD AND NATURAL RESOURCE USE SYSTEM

In the context of the convergence of global crises since 2008, multilateralism has been losing ground to multi-stakeholderism – the multiple stakeholder-based governance model. In its current format, this model is largely the result of efforts by the World Economic Forum (WEF) to formulate a new global governance system (Gleckman, 2016, p. 92).[15] In theory, multi-stakeholder governance gives different social, corporate and state actors the same voice and voting powers. But, in reality, the different actors are in different positions of power, and are more or less able to advance their interests in and views about the future of the agrifood and resource-use system (see McKeon, 2017). This is why the multi-stakeholder model entails important consequences for the global governance of this system.

To start with, the agribusiness sector at the forefront of the sustainable intensification of agriculture with agroecological nuances is now trying to influence governments, NGOs and social organisations, as much as the other way around.[16] This is in order to legitimise the new role that big agrifood capital has assigned itself as the champion against the global crises (to which it significantly contributed). To facilitate the creation of this new playing field, the World Economic Forum signed, in June 2019, a Strategic Association Agreement with the UN for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (SDGs). This agreement formalises the expansion of the multi-stakeholder governance model to fundamental spheres such as education, health, food, and climate change, education, health or food (WEF, 2019c). In addition, SAI, NVA and FOLU privilege the adoption of private codes of conduct (such as the GLOBAL G.A.P) and the use of for-profit certification companies (such as agroVet GmbH and Bureau Veritas) to demonstrate the sustainability, safety and social benefits of their agrifood consortia to the world. As the Head of Sustainability of the Business Finance Department of Rabobank said, 'the most genuine sustainability policies start where the law ends' (Rabobank, 2019).

However, this position blurs the boundary between private transnational corporations' role as as providers of products and services, and their human rights obligations. In other words, it implies a firm step towards the constitution of private transnational corporations as subjects of international public law (or human rights law). The most extreme case of this is the SAI initiative, which, as will be revealed below, took on the task of 'protect[ing] and preserv[ing] the earth's resources, human rights and animal welfare' in the name of private transnational corporations (SAI, 2019j). However, the World Economic Forum's System Initiative on Shaping the Future of Food Security and Agriculture, from which the NVA emerged, also hopes that, by 2030, 'businesses, governments, international organizations and other food system stakeholders effectively provide farmers with the infrastructure, policies, regulations and services they need to thrive' (WEF, 2018a, p. 9).

14 That is, the amount of product obtained per cultivated area and unit of labor used, respectively.
15 In its 'Global Redesign Initiative' of 2010, the WEF makes a call to 'redefine the international system as constituting a wider, multifaceted system of global cooperation in which intergovernmental legal frameworks and institutions are embedded as a core, *but not the sole and sometimes not the most crucial*, component' (WEF, 2010a, p. 7).
16 See TNI report about 'The natural resource property reform under convergent global crises.' (Alonso-Fradejas, forthcoming 2020).

THE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE INITIATIVE (SAI)

04

Supermarket.
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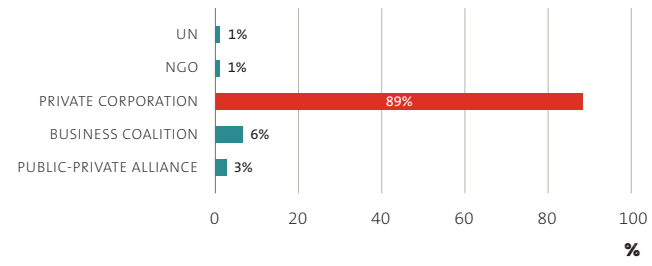
IDENTITY, PURPOSE AND TYPES OF MEMBERS

Established in 2002 by Danone, Nestlé and Unilever, the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) is the oldest of the three initiatives under discussion (SAI, 2019f). Moreover, SAI claims that it 'has become the single most powerful global organisation dedicated to sustainable agriculture' (SAI, 2019j). Whether or not that is the case, SAI is no doubt a powerful platform that includes the agrifood sector's largest transnational corporations among its 106 members. SAI's Executive Committee is chaired by Unilever and it includes representatives of PepsiCo, Muntons, Mars, Innocent Drinks, Nestlé, Marks & Spencer, McCain Foods and Danone (SAI, 2019h). Figure 1 shows that 95% of SAI's multinational members represent private corporate interests.

FIGURE 1 MULTINATIONAL MEMBERS OF SAI, BY TYPE OF ORGANISATION



SOURCE: PREPARED BY AUTHORS BASED ON DATA FROM ORBIS AND SAI (2019E, 2019G).

SAI's essentially corporate nature is reflected in its arguments encouraging its member companies to collaborate with small-scale food producers: 'giving support to smallholders helps build stronger relationships with governments, enhances the ability to meet the expectations of various stakeholders, improves corporate reputation, and brings companies into alignment with initiatives such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)' (SAI, 2019b). The corporations behind SAI share 'the commitment to develop sustainable agriculture in a pre-competitive environment'. (SAI, 2019e). This is why SAI has the mission to 'harness the collaborative capacity of our members to accelerate the widespread adoption of sustainable agricultural practices' (SAI, 2019j). This is geared towards what seem to be the goals of a critical social movement to develop 'a sustainable, thriving and resilient agricultural sector that safeguards farm viability and protects and preserves the earth's resources, human rights and animal welfare while supporting our members and adding value across the food and beverages industry' (*ibid.*). To this end, SAI organises itself through 4 working groups and committees 'i) The Crops Working Group; ii) the Dairy Working Group; iii) the European Roundtable for Beef Sustainability' and iv) the Horizons Committee, which deals with urging and broad scope issues such as labour, land use and mitigating climate change' (SAI, 2019i).

SAI'S 'JUNK AGROECOLOGY'

SAI has its own definition of sustainable agriculture, as well as a series of 'sustainable farming practices and principles' which can be met by its members through a Farm Sustainability Assessment Program (FSA). As described below, the definition of sustainable agriculture, the farming practices and principles and the FSA itself respond to a self-serving interpretation of the sustainable intensification of agriculture approach (SI), which aims to maintain the status quo of big agrifood capital. But, at the same time and with the same profit-making intention, all of these SAI proposals incorporate discourses, practices and processes that correspond to the agroecological approach.

According to SAI, sustainable agriculture is 'a cost-effective, competitive and efficient way of producing safe agricultural products, while protecting and improving at the same time the natural environment and social/economic conditions of local communities' (Vorhies, 2012). In 2009, in order to facilitate the production and sourcing of agricultural raw materials according to its definition of sustainable agriculture, the SAI published a series of 'Principles and Practices of Sustainable Production' for different types of crop/livestock production. SAI claims these were 'the first ever set of [agrifood] industry-agreed, tested and harmonized guidelines, and a proof that our collaborative, pre-competitive approach worked' (SAI, 2019f).

A 'junk agroecology' perspective on the sustainable intensification of agriculture permeates these SAI principles. A good example is the recommendation included in the 'Principles & Practices for the Sustainable Production of Arable & Vegetable Crops', which states that 'the farm shall strive to minimize greenhouse gas emissions: By reducing the use of non-renewable sources of energy, and by optimizing the use of energy-intensive inputs, e.g. inorganic fertilizers' (SAI, 2009, p. 16).

Another example is the Farm Sustainability Assessment program (FSA). According to SAI, thanks to the FSA program 'farmers now have a tool to monitor and assess the sustainability of their practices and demonstrate this to their customers. Many of the world's leading food and beverage companies began to use it to source sustainably produced agricultural raw materials and meet their goals' (SAI, 2019f). Moreover, several of the 127 questions included in SAI's FSA assessment questionnaire refer to principles, techniques, processes and technologies that belong to agroecology. Some examples of this selective appropriation of the agroecological approach, applied to sustainable intensification at the service of capital, include (SAI, 2019c):

- **Question 17**, relating to the 'optimum seed rate', for which they recommend 'intercropping' and 'companion planting to improve and stabilize farm income and benefit biodiversity'.
- **Question 23:** Do you choose fertilizer type, quantity and application method according to crop needs whilst reducing environmental impacts?
- **Question 35:** Do you apply chemical crop protection products only when absolutely necessary and use alternative methods where possible?
- **Question 63:** Have you assessed biodiversity and identified priority actions to preserve biodiversity on your farm?
- **Question 88:** Do permanent and temporary workers receive appropriate payment for their tasks and abilities while having equal work opportunities?
- **Question 111:** Does your farm contribute actively to the neighbouring communities?

THE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE INITIATIVE (SAI) CONTINUED

04

SAI has an alliance with certification company GLOBALG.A.P. to 'match the production standards of GLOBALG.A.P. with the sustainability requirements of FSA-SAI and offer the GLOBALG.A.P Farm Sustainability Assessment (GGFSA)' tool (GLOBALG.A.P., 2019). The idea of this alliance is to open and consolidate markets for global value chains led by transnational corporations, but which include farms managed according to the FSA-SAI techniques and principles. The link between sustainability and profit opportunities is precisely one of the aspects that SAI itself highlighted during its June 2019 annual convention in Chicago (USA): 'key practices for healthier soil include no tillage, use of cover crops, crop and plant diversity and inclusion of livestock. However, it is also through creating markets that the diversity needed to maintain healthy soil will be generated' (SAI, 2019a).

For SAI another key aspect regarding the 'transition towards sustainable agriculture' is 'technological innovation' (SAI, 2019f). For instance, in its 2018 annual convention, SAI held discussions about 'the benefits of technology for smallholders, big data, and the opportunity presented by agri-food blockchains' (SAI, 2018, p. 41). Further, in its 2019 annual convention about 'the Future of Agriculture,' the debate about the adoption of new technologies in the agricultural sector was central, together with the relative role of youth and women in the process of sustainable intensification of agriculture based on the logic (and at the service) of agrifood capital. In her opening address, the PepsiCo Vice President for Global Sustainable Agriculture and Responsible Sourcing said that 'the next generation of farmers need mathematical, computer science and NOMP tech skills' (SAI, 2019b). Despite the fact that SAI has only one woman among the nine members of its Executive Committee (SAI, 2019h), PepsiCo's VP called for recognition of the important role of women in agriculture, arguing that 'if more women were running farms, there is a prediction of reduction in global hunger by 100 million' (SAI, 2019a).

At the same time, in the document that synthesises its 2019 convention, SAI puts forward a series of ideas that could be those of an intergovernmental body concerned with environmental sustainability and social equity in agriculture. On the one hand, SAI argues that 'the next step for farming is more diversity in terms of skills and education, and the inclusion of more women. On a global scale, there is a need to address the fact that women work longer hours, they do not hold land titles, are unable to buy quality seeds or machinery, and lack education and support' (SAI, 2019d). On the other hand, the SAI recognised that 'digital literacy as well as the use of and access to data remains a contentious issue for farmers [although] already, there is a generational change taking place due to a willingness to use data and e-tools. As experienced by the Almond Board of California, young people are now returning to almond farms and making money' (ibid). The former are good examples of how 'junk agroecology' partially and selectively integrates discourses from the transformative agroecological paradigm.

Industrial agriculture: watering a celery crop, Salinas Valley, California USA.
© Pgiam / Istock

THE NEW VISION FOR AGRICULTURE (NVA)

05

Mechanised seed planting.
© Satyrenko / Shutterstock

IDENTITY, PURPOSE AND TYPES OF MEMBERS OF THE NVA

The 'New Vision for Agriculture' (NVA) is one of the two pillars of the 'World Economic Forum's System Initiative on Shaping the Future of Food Security and Agriculture' (WEF, 2017, p. 3).[17] This framework initiative from the WEF has the mission 'to build inclusive, sustainable, efficient and nutritious food systems through leadership-driven, market-based action and collaboration, informed by insights and innovation, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals' (WEF, 2018b, p. 1). The WEF considers that 'to feed almost 10 billion people by 2050, while meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), food systems will need to be:

- '**Inclusive:** smallholder farmers, including women and young people, are fully integrated into food systems with access to financing, insurance, transport, education, mechanization leasing and storage.
- **Sustainable:** minimizing negative environmental impacts, conserving scarce natural resources, saving biodiversity loss and strengthening resiliency against future shocks.
- **Efficient:** producing adequate quantities of nutritious and healthy foods for global needs while minimizing loss and waste' (WEF, 2018a, p. 9)

17 The other pillar is the 'Enhancement of Global Food Systems'.

THE NEW VISION FOR AGRICULTURE (NVA) CONTINUED

05

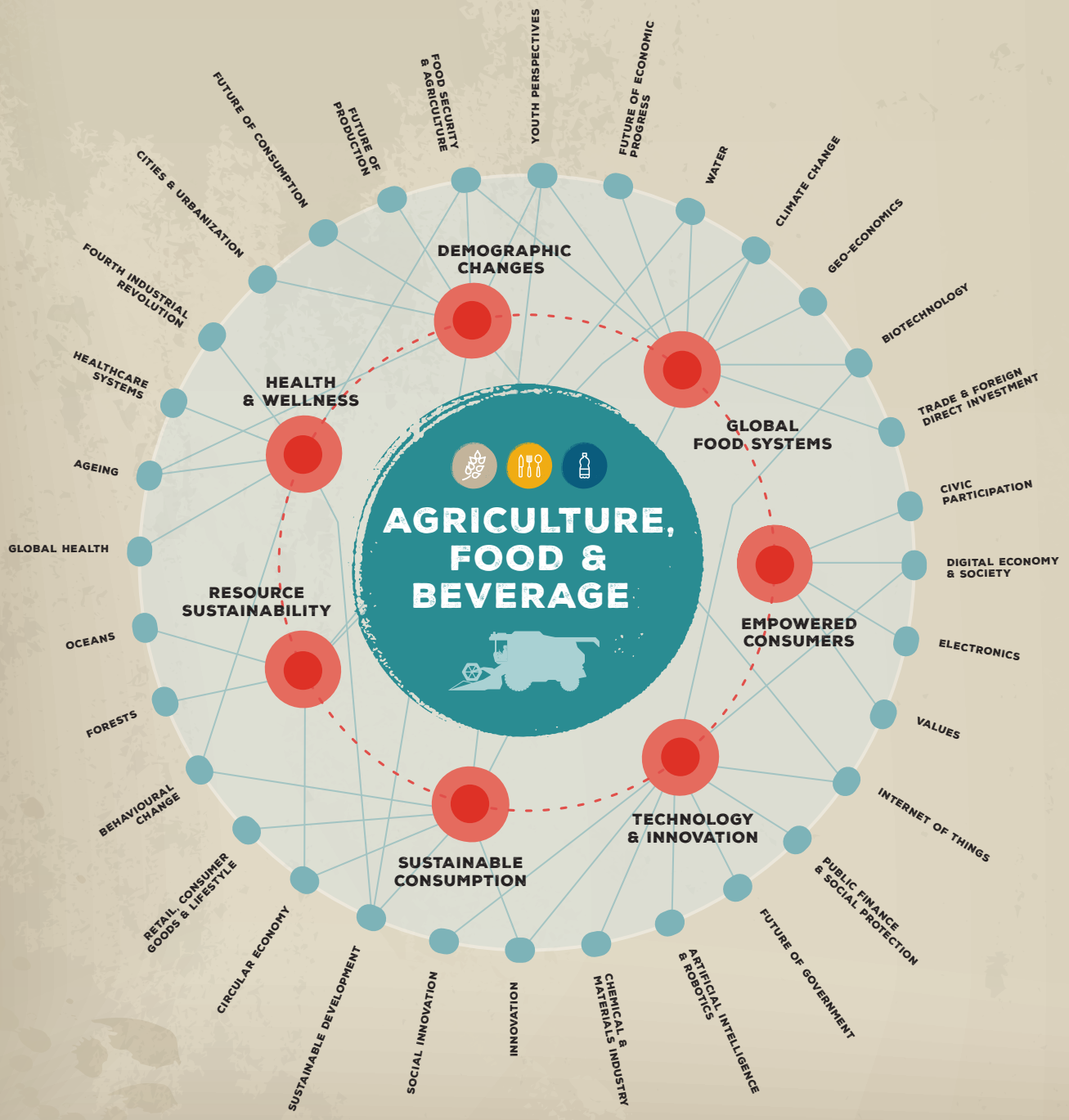
Figure 2 below describes the main components, lines of action and influence of this WEF system framework initiative. In addition, the infographic offers a general view of the agrifood system envisioned by the WEF in the transition towards a 'green capitalism,', guided by a multi-stakeholder system and driven by the "'4th Industrial Revolution"'.[18] Unsurprisingly, the infographic highlights the importance of components of WEF's future agrifood and resource-use system such as: biotechnology, the 'internet of things,' the future of governance, consumer empowerment, international trade and direct foreign investment. The infographic also underlines the recurring productivist neo-Malthusian argument that emphasises the need to produce more to feed a growing global population, without questioning the use and particularly the distribution of and ability to access available food.

Left: Tractor spraying soy fields.
© Fotokostic / Istock

Below: Harvesting sugarcane, Brazil.
© Mailsonpignata / Shutterstock

18 According to the founder and President of the WEF 'the First Industrial Revolution used water and steam power to mechanize production. The Second used electric power to create mass production. The Third used electronics and information technology to automate production. Now a Fourth Industrial Revolution is building on the Third, the digital revolution that has been occurring since the middle of the last century. It is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres [at an unprecedented] velocity, scope, and systems impact' (Schwab, 2016).

FIGURE 2 | COMPONENTS, LINES OF ACTION AND INFLUENCE OF THE WORK OF THE WEF IN TERMS OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND BEVERAGES



Source: WEF's Strategic Intelligence (2019a).

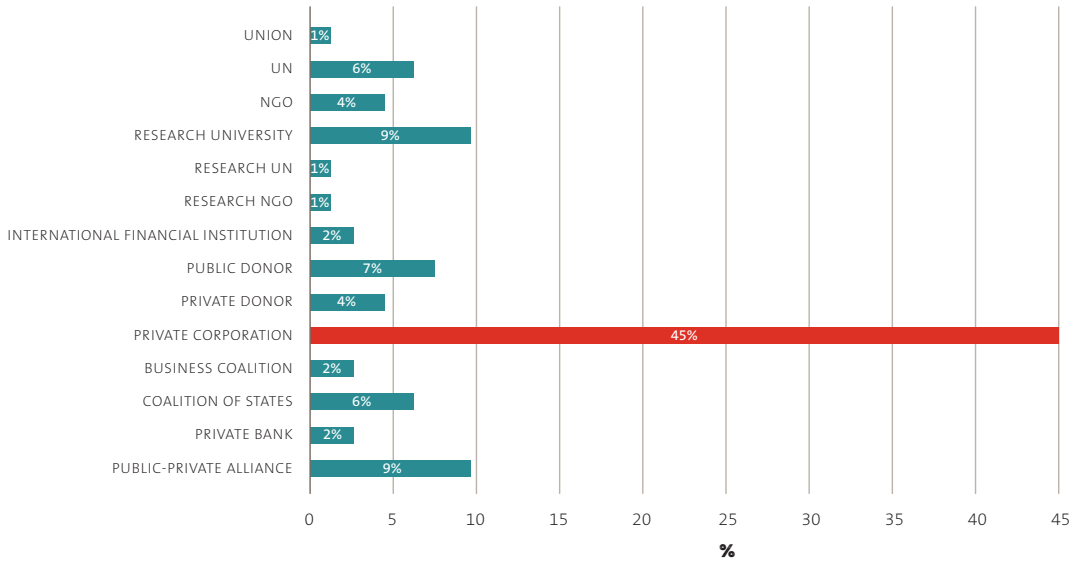
THE NEW VISION FOR AGRICULTURE (NVA) CONTINUED

In the context of this framework initiative to influence the future of food security and agriculture, in 2009 the WEF launched its 'New Vision for Agriculture' (NVA) to 'demonstrate that the market-based, multi-stakeholder approach can deliver food security, environmental sustainability and economic opportunity'. (FEM, 2014, p. 1). To this end, the NVA explains its '20/20/20 goals': 'to increase production by 20% while decreasing emissions by 20% and reducing the prevalence of rural poverty by 20% every decade' (WEF, 2010b, p. 4).

The WEF's NVA is the largest of the three initiatives under discussion. In 2018, the NVA was present in 21 African, Asian and Latin American countries, through regional units: i) GrowAfrica, ii) Grow Asia, iii) NVA India, and iv) NVA Latin America.[19] That same year, the NVA involved over 650 organisations at the global, regional and national level (WEF, 2018b, p. 1). In order to meet its goals, the NVA proposes a clear division of tasks between governments, corporations and civil society, in line with the new global governance system promoted by WEF: 'governments must lead, setting the direction for their country's transformation and creating the right environment to achieve it. Businesses drive implementation through innovation, investment and competition. Civil society mobilizes and supports communities, manages risk, builds local capacity and bridges gaps not addressed by the market' (WEF, 2010b, p. 5).

Despite its seeming diversity, Figure 3 shows that 49% of NVA's multinational members represent the interests of the global agrifood capital. Notwithstanding the participation of other types of organisations, and according to the WEF itself, 'the NVA is led by 17 powerful transnational corporations from the agricultural and food sectors: Archer Daniels Midland, BASF, Bunge, Cargill, Coca-Cola, DuPont, General Mills, Kraft Foods, Metro, Monsanto, Nestlé, PepsiCo, SABMiller, Syngenta (ChemChina), Unilever, Wal-Mart and Yara International'(WEF, 2010b, p. 4). That is to say, the same transnational corporations that substantially contribute to the multiple current global crises.

FIGURE 3 | MULTINATIONAL MEMBERS OF NVA, BY TYPE OF ORGANISATION



SOURCE: PREPARED BY AUTHORS BASED ON DATA FROM ORBIS AND FEM (2010B, 2013, 2017, 2018B).

19 For a critical and informed review of the work of the NVA in Asia, Africa and Latin America see GRAIN's report (2017) Grow-ing disaster: the Fortune 500 goes farming. Available at: https://www.grain.org/en/article/5622-grow-ing-disaster-the-fortune-500-goes-farming

05

THE NVA'S 'JUNK AGROECOLOGY'

NVA also adopts an approach of sustainable intensification of agriculture with agroecological nuances to 'produce much more with less'(WEF, 2010b, p. 7). To that end, on the one hand, NVA argues that it is no longer sufficient to rely on 'increased yields in developed countries. Yield growth in developing countries is vital to meet global demand' (WEF 2010b, p. 10).

On the other, NVA also envisions a key role for big capital in the future agrifood system, including 'traditional competencies such as technological expertise, financing and sourcing, as well as more proactive roles like private outreach services, smallholder aggregation (e.g. nucleus farms, warehouses), nutrition education and multi-stakeholder coordination. In stepping up to lead the transformative process, companies can harness the power of markets to deliver enduring impact'(WEF, 2010b, p. 18). This renewed faith in the market and 'residual' understanding of impoverishment is, precisely, the perspective that emerges from the conferences on 'Women in Agribusiness' organised by GrowAfrica in the framework of the NVA. In his opening speech at the 3rd Conference for Women in Agribusiness, in South Africa in 2017, the CEO of the African Union's 'New Partnership for Africa's Development' (NEPAD), said that 'expanded accessible markets is a critical condition for success in building viable and therefore success [sic] entrepreneurs.' (GrowAfrica, 2018).

The NVA also promotes technological determinism and relies on large agrifood corporations to provide sustainable intensification of agriculture, using all the power of the new technologies of the '4th Industrial Revolution'(WEF, 2018a, p. 8). Among these, NVA highlights the following five technologies:

'precision agriculture for input and water use optimization; ii) gene-editing for multi-trait seed improvements (e.g. CRISPR technology); iii) microbiome technologies to enhance crop resilience; iv) off-grid renewable energy generation and storage for access to electricity and v) biological-based crop protection and micronutrients for soil management' (WEF, 2018a, p. 11).

However, just like SAI and FOLU, NVA also includes agroecological discourses, techniques and technologies in its model of agricultural intensification. These are described as regenerative practices, which allow farmers 'to both drive carbon into the soil, and keep it there', and which include 'planting cover crops, no-till farming, rotating crops, reducing chemicals and fertilizers, and incorporating livestock' (Perry, 2019). The NVA goes as far as arguing that 'biological-based crop additives and micronutrients *could help reduce and possibly replace chemicals* while improving soil quality' (WEF, 2018a, p. 10).

In fact, NVA identifies a series of challenges and problems associated with the new technologies of the 4th Industrial Revolution for the sustainable intensification of agriculture. They 'raise concerns pertaining to health and safety, the environment, privacy and ethics. They can create unintended consequences, which must be considered and explored in advance. In addition, their positive effects may be unevenly distributed, potentially deepening the divide between rich and poor' (WEF, 2018a, p. 8). However, the proposed solution to avoid these issues and maximise the positive impacts of new technologies is to promote 'coordinated efforts by investors, innovators and policy-makers'(*ibid.*).

Finally NVA, and the World Economic Forum more generally, also consider that new generations will play a key role in the adoption of new agricultural intensification technologies. In order to promote the active involvement of youth in NVA and its other initiatives, WEF has a 'Forum of Young Global Leaders'.[20] The prevailing political perspective of this forum is briefly but clearly summarised by one of its members, a co-founder of blockchain startup Perlin. According to this young global leader, 'young people today want more than just activism, they want participation. So if they are able to participate by securing this distributed ledger, by running a node - a way of participating in the blockchain process - [by] also lobbying and pressuring for more data to be disclosed, I feel that it allows the young people to do more than just strike'(Pomeroy, 2019).

Soy fields near Mariscal Estagarribia, Boqueron, part of the dry Chaco, Paraguay.
© Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland

20 https://www.younggloballeaders.org/

THE NEW FOOD & LAND USE ECONOMY COALITION (FOLU)

06

Vertical indoor farm producing plant vaccines.
© Yein Jeon / Shutterstock

IDENTITY, PURPOSE AND TYPES OF MEMBERS OF FOLU

The FOLU is also linked to the World Economic Forum (WEF) because it emerged as a result of the work of the *Business & Sustainable Development Commission* (BSDC), which was created in the WEF's 2016 annual meeting in Davos. Between 2016 and 2018, the BSDC published a series of reports that set the basis for other sectorial and longer-term initiatives, such as the Food and Land Use Economy Coalition (FOLU).

Without a question, the star report of the BSDC is the 2017 publication titled 'Better business, better world'. This report focuses on the business opportunities provided by the 2030 sustainable development agenda. With reference to the agricultural, food and natural resource sector, the report establishes that 'the 14 largest opportunities in 2030 identified for companies that develop business models addressing these and further challenges facing food and agriculture have an estimated potential value of over US$2.3 trillion [...]' and of creating 71 million jobs around the world (BSDC, 2017, pp. 30, 41).[21] In addition, the BSDC openly argues that 'to capture these opportunities in full, businesses need to pursue social and environmental sustainability as avidly as they pursue market share and shareholder value. If a critical mass of companies joins us in doing this now, together we will become an unstoppable force.' (BSDC, 2017, p. 14). In this endeavour BSDC considers that women should take the lead because:

there is evidence that businesses with more women in high-level management positions, particularly on directorial boards, are better able to shift their business's focus from maximizing short-term profit to achieving longer-term growth goals. [...] Research shows that women leaders also tend to be collaborative and skilled at balancing multiple stakeholders' interests to reach decisions that benefit all parties [...] Companies with women board members are also more likely to offer employees better working conditions and stronger benefits, and to protect their 'licence to operate' by making an effort to help vulnerable communities along their supply chain(BSDC, 2018, pp. 11, 12).

21 It is worth noting once more, nonetheless, that the BSDC does not state who will benefit from that wealth, nor how many jobs –including of those considered to be 'green'— can be sacrificed in an ecological transition that serves the interests of big capital.

06

This is how the FOLU emerges as a global multi-stakeholder initiative to explore and seize the business opportunities offered by a transition towards a 'greener' agrifood and resource-use system. This identity is reflected in FOLU's vision of advancing towards 'food and land use systems that create new economic value while simultaneously:

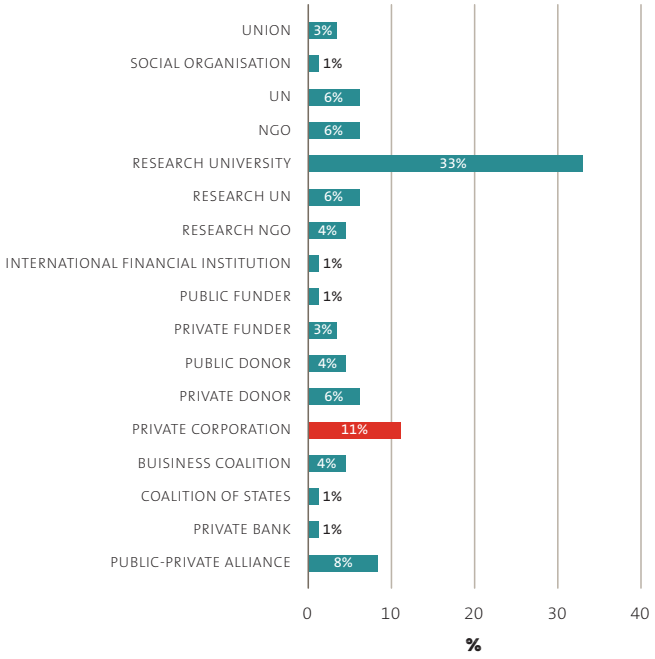
- Protecting and restoring precious natural resources and ecosystems
- Shifting our systems from contributing a quarter of our greenhouse gases to absorbing more than they emit
- Finding a healthier, less wasteful way to feed over nine billion people by 2050
- Providing a more prosperous and resilient lifestyle for farmers and their families, in rich and poor countries alike' (FOLU, 2019a).

To realise this idyllic vision, in 2018, FOLU launched the 'Food, Agriculture, Biodiversity, Land-Use and Energy Consortium'(FABLE). FABLE emerged as another global multi-stakeholder (sub) initiative, aiming 'to support the preparation of integrated national pathways towards sustainable land-use and food systems that are consistent [...] with the Paris Climate Agreement and the SDGs' (FABLE, 2019, pp. 14, 11). In August 2019, the FABLE consortium already had teams in 18 countries around the world.[22]

The main members of FOLU include, once again, key actors in the current agrifood and resource-use system, including the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the EAT Foundation, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UNSDSN), the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and the World Resources Institute (WRI). The main funders include the MAVA Foundation pour la Nature, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, Unilever, the government of Norway and Yara International. In addition, FOLU has a broad global network of ambassadors including representatives of transnational corporations, universities, intergovernmental and civil society organisations (FOLU, 2019b). Meanwhile, FABLE is coordinated by IIASA, UNSDSN and the EAT Foundation.

Of the three initiatives analysed, FOLU-FABLE is the one where transnational corporate interests are the least represented, but this does not necessarily mean that they have less influence. It is true that Figure 4 shows that 43% of FOLU-FABLE members that operate at a multinational level are research institutions. However, we saw that FOLU emerged as a result of a World Economic Forum commission led by representatives of large transnational corporations, such as the BSDC, and that Unilever's CEO chairs its Board of Directors (FOLU, 2018).

FIGURE 4 MULTINATIONAL MEMBERS OF FOLU-FABLE, BY TYPE OF ORGANISATION



SOURCE: PREPARED BY AUTHORS BASED ON DATA FROM ORBIS AND FOLU (2019B).

FOLU'S 'JUNK AGROECOLOGY'

The future sustainable agrifood and resource-use system envisioned by FOLU-FABLE is based on three pillars: i) efficient and resilient agricultural systems, ii) biodiversity conservation and restoration and iii) food security and healthy diets (Schmidt-Traub, Obersteiner and Mosnier, 2019, p. 182). Increasing agricultural productivity (*ibid.*) through the *'sustainable intensification of the sector with the adoption of agroecological elements* and improved functioning of agricultural markets' is the key to the construction of the first pillar (TWI2050, 2018, p. 31, emphasis added).

The truth is, then, that just like in the case of NVA and SAI, FOLU-FABLE largely attributes rural poverty to the low productivity of small-scale food producers, their limited access to markets and their high vulnerability to external climate events (FABLE, 2019, p. 22). But, unlike the other initiatives, in which private corporations take the lead, FOLU-FABLE challenges the dogma around the insertion of small-scale food producers into global commodity chains as a strategy to fight poverty. This does not mean that this 'silver bullet' against poverty is disregarded. Rather, FOLU calls for reflection and learning around the 'best practices' of productive linkage, naming the

22 Including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Ethiopia, the European Union, Finland, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia, Rwanda, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the US (FABLE 2019, p. 11).

THE NEW FOOD & LAND USE ECONOMY COALITION (FOLU) CONTINUED

06

work of Unilever and Olam (ibid) as an example. In fact, FOLU adopts a Solomonic position and states that 'depending on the value chains and geographies considered, the transformation of the agricultural sector might rely on smallholder farms, larger landholdings or both, and will require different types of investment'(FABLE, 2019, p. 23). For instance, in Colombia, FOLU-FABLE proposes to that the next steps are to 'map productive linkages that make the difference for the different regions of Colombia. Also, to identify innovative actions by small, medium size and large companies that can be scaled-up, and to generate public-private collaboration networks in the regions' (FOLU-Colombia, 2018, p. 105).

On the other hand, FOLU also exhibits a high degree of technological determinism, prioritising new technologies and the methods of sustainable intensification of agriculture offered by the 4th Industrial Revolution, or the 'digital revolution', as FOLU prefers to call it (TWI2050, 2019). Aiming to 'produce more in less land', FOLU mentions the need for 'genetic improvements in plants and animals that increase productivity'(Schmidt-Traub, Obersteiner and Mosnier, 2019, p. 182). As regards genetic modification, FOLU adopts a rather cautious position. While on the one hand it recognises that this has been a complicated discussion in the past decades, (TWI2050, 2019, p. 60), it also states that 'it is hard to imagine a scenario in which these genetically modified crops do not in one form or another become part of the solution'(*ibid.*). Consequently, FOLU recommends developing 'totally new techno-biosocial-cultural solutions; at the same time, *societal acceptance of these solutions will need to be secured* in order for these innovations to be implemented'(ibid, p. 60, emphasis added).

As should have been expected, FOLU calls for the widespread implementation of new, more efficient agricultural practices that minimize environmental impacts (Schmidt-Traub, Obersteiner and Mosnier, 2019). Specifically, it refers to 'precision farming [...], drip irrigation and integrated pest management. Robotics, sensor webs and artificial intelligence could help to increase farmers' incomes by linking markets, optimizing inputs and reducing food loss and waste' (Schmidt-Traub, Obersteiner and Mosnier, 2019, p. 182). According to FOLU, in addition, 'GPS enabled autonomous farm machinery can operate 24/7, reducing labour inputs and minimizing planting and harvesting costs' (TWI2050, 2019, p. 59).

FOLU also includes techniques and technologies that belong to agroecology in its menu of solutions for sustainable intensification. Admitting that 'precision agriculture does not call into question pesticide and herbicide use', FOLU recommends the use of 'a variety of biodiversity-based land management techniques including agroforestry, silvopasture, diversified farming, and ecosystem-based forest management' (TWI2050, 2019, p. 59). To that end, FOLU proposes relying on the 'increasing number of companies generating cutting-edge research into bio-inputs that boost productivity without affecting the environment or health' (FOLU, 2019c).

FOLU's work in Latin America is a good illustration of this proposal to selectively use agroecological techniques within the framework of sustainable intensification of agriculture. In Argentina, FOLU's platform considers the possibility of exploring 'the potential for Argentina to shift from being a producer of commodities to being a producer of high agricultural value products [...] and the promotion of environmentally friendly agricultural practices, such as agroecology' (FABLE, 2019, p. 83). In Colombia, considering the limited number of certified farmers with good agricultural practices (i.e. GlobalG.A.P), 'leveraging the power of companies who take sustainability seriously offers another important route to change. For example, fertilizer company Yara International provides extension services to farmers who employ sustainable practices' (FOLU, 2019c). Here FOLU identifies as key actors in its initiative 'agroecological groups that emerge from the regions, B Companies that use market power to generate environmental and social benefits, networks of people who protect seeds and generate systems to bring the countryside closer to the cities, as well as all peasants and ethnic communities which join the initiatives for the protection of forests and ecosystems'(FOLU-Colombia, 2018, p. 105). Among other activities, FOLU in Colombia intends to build the capacities of agricultural producers:

- 'For the adaptation of farmers to climate change, [which] will contribute to reducing their vulnerability to this phenomenon and promote the dissemination of sustainable and resilient agroecological systems' (2018, p. 32).
- 'To enhance organic and agroecological production systems that produce food free from pesticides, mercury and other toxic substances'(2018, p. 48).
- Promote 'the inclusion of women in production spaces where they have been historically excluded, showing the advantages and roles they could play to ensure sustainable and diversified production' (2018, p. 50)
- Promote 'organic and agroecological practices, aiming to increase the supply of this type of products in response to the growing global demand'(2018, p. 50).
- 'Generate technological packages that bring together modern science and traditional knowledge to generate a hybrid that results in a new innovative economy that contributes to the consolidation of sustainable productive territories'(2018, p. 70).

KEEPING QUESTIONABLE COMPANY: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MULTINATIONAL MEMBERS OF SAI, NVA AND FOLU

07

Ploughed field ready for sowing, United Kingdom.
© Kelvinjay / Istock

Table 1 and Figure 5 below detail the network of multinational members of SAI, NVA and FOLU, as well as their interrelations.

TABLE 1 LIST OF TRANSNATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS OF NVA, FOLU AND SAI INITIATIVES

TYPE OF BODY	BODY	ACRONYMS IN FIGURE 5	NVA	FOLU	SAI
PPP	World Economic Forum	FEM	•	•	
PPP	EAT Foundation	EAT	•	•	
PPP	The Sustainability Consortium	TSC			•
PPP	International Union for Conservation of Nature	IUCN	•	•	
PPP	The Sustainable Trade Initiative	IDH			•
PPP	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa	AGRA	•	•	
PPP	Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network	FANRPAN	•		
PPP	The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition	GAIN		•	
PPP	Cool Farm Alliance	CFA			•
PPP	GROWAFRICA	GROWAFRICA	•		
PPP	New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa	NAFSN	•		
PPP	GROWASIA	GROWASIA	•		
Coalition of States	Group of 7	G7	•		
Coalition of States	Group of 20	G20	•		
Coalition of States	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	ASEAN	•		
Coalition of States	African Union	AU-NEPAD	•	•	

KEEPING QUESTIONABLE COMPANY: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MULTINATIONAL MEMBERS OF SAI, NVA AND FOLU

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TABLE 1 LIST OF TRANSNATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS OF NVA, FOLU AND SAI INITIATIVES CONTINUED

TYPE OF BODY	BODY	ACRONYMS IN FIGURE 5	NVA	FOLU	SAI
Coalition of States	Economic Community of West African States	ECOWAS	•		
UN	UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network	UNSDSN		•	
UN	Convention on Biological Diversity	CBD		•	
UN	International Trade Centre (ITC)	ITC			•
UN	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	FAO	•	•	
UN	World Health Organization	WHO	•		
UN	Scaling Up Nutrition Movement	SUN	•	•	
UN	World Food Programme	WFP	•		
UN	International Fund for Agricultural Development	IFAD	•		
Public donor	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation	Norway		•	
Public donor	United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	US	•		
Public donor	The Netherlands Government	The Netherlands	•		
Public donor	Canada Government (IDRC and GAC)	Canada	•		
Public donor	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	Switzerland	•		
Public donor	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)	Australia	•		
IFI	World Bank and International Finance Corporation of the World Bank	World Bank	•	•	
IFI	African Development Bank	AfDV	•		
Public funder	Global Environment Facility	GEF		•	
Private donor	MAVA Fondation pour la Nature	MAVA Fondation		•	
Private donor	Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation	G&B Moore Foundation		•	
Private donor	Rockefeller Foundation	Rockefeller	•		
Private donor	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Gates Foundation	•		
Private donor	Wellcome Trust	Wellcome	•		
Private funder	SYSTEMIQ	SYSTEMIQ		•	
Private funder	Aavishkaar Venture Management Services (India)	Aavishkaar		•	
Private bank	Rabobank	Rabobank	•	•	
Private bank	J. Safra Group	Safra	•		
Research PPP	Malabo Montpellier Panel	Mamo Panel	•	•	
Research UN	International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)	IFPRI		•	
Research UN	World Agroforestry Centre	ICRAF		•	
Research UN	International Center for Tropical Agriculture	CIAT	•		
Research UN	Biodiversity International	BI		•	
Research UN	International Resource Panel	IRP-UNEP		•	
Research University	Natural Resources Institute University of Greenwich	NRIUG		•	
Research University	Gadjah Mada University Indonesia	UoGM		•	
Research University	Addis Ababa University Ethiopia	AAU		•	
Research University	University of Indonesia	UoI		•	
Research University	Johns Hopkins University	JHU		•	
Research University	Oxford University	OU		•	
Research University	French Agricultural, Veterinary and Forestry Institute	Agreenium		•	
Research University	Harvard Kennedy School of Government	Harvard	•		
Research University	Universitty of Leeds	Leeds Uni	•		
Research University	Tufts University	Tufts	•		
Research University	Massachussets Institute of Technology	MIT	•		
Research University	Nanjing Agricultural University	Nanjing Ag Uni	•		
Research University	Notre Dame University	Notre Dame Uni	•		

TABLE 1 LIST OF TRANSNATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS OF NVA, FOLU AND SAI INITIATIVES CONTINUED

TYPE OF BODY	BODY	ACRONYMS IN FIGURE 5	NVA	FOLU	SAI
Research University	City University London	City Uni London	•		
Research NGO	Institute for Applied Systems Analysis	IIASA		•	
Research NGO	World Resources Institute	WRI	•	•	
Research NGO	Latin American Center for Rural Development	Rimisp		•	
Union	Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions	SACAU	•	•	
Union	International Trade Union Confederation	CSI/ITUC		•	
Social organization	Bharat Krishak Samaj (India Farmers' Forum)	BKS		•	
NGO	The World Wide Fund for Nature	WWF	•	•	•
NGO	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	•		
NGO	Mercy Corps	Mercy Corps	•		
NGO	Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network	CSAYN		•	
NGO	LEAP Africa	LEAP		•	
NGO	Wildlife Conservation Society	WCS		•	
Business coalition	World Business Council for Sustainable Development	WBCSD	•	•	•
Business coalition	Business & Sustainable Development Commission	BSDC	•	•	
Business coalition	Sustainable Food Lab	SFLab			•
Business coalition	AIM-PROGRESS	AIM-PROGRESS			•
Business coalition	Dairy Sustainability Framework	DSF			•
Business coalition	From Field to Market	Field to Market			•
Business coalition	European Fruit Juice Association	AIJN			•
Business coalition	Private Council for Competitiveness (USA)	CfC		•	
Private corporation	Unilever	Unilever	•	•	•
Private corporation	Yara International	YARA	•	•	
Private corporation	UPL Limited	UPL		•	
Private corporation	Protix BV	Protix	•		
Private corporation	Royal DSM NV	DSM	•	•	
Private corporation	Cargill	Cargill	•	•	•
Private corporation	Gro Intelligence	Gro-I		•	
Private corporation	Olam International	Olam		•	
Private corporation	Adani Group	Adani	•		
Private corporation	Al Dahra Holding	Al Dahra Holding	•		
Private corporation	Anheuser-Busch InBev NV	Anheuser-Busch	•		
Private corporation	BASF SE	BASF	•		
Private corporation	Bayer Monsanto	Bayer Monsanto	•		
Private corporation	Bunge	Bunge	•		•
Private corporation	Dow DuPont	Dow DuPont	•		•
Private corporation	Deloitte	Deloitte	•		
Private corporation	Evonik Industries AG	Evonik	•		
Private corporation	Fomento Económico Mexicano, S.A.B. de C.V. and Coca-Cola	Coca Cola FEMSA	•		•
Private corporation	Heineken	Heineken	•		•
Private corporation	Hewlett Packard	HP	•		
Private corporation	Kirin Holding Company	Kirin	•		
Private corporation	Jerónimo Martins	JM	•		
Private corporation	Kuwaiti Danish Dairy Corporation	KDDC	•		
Private corporation	Louis Dreyfus Commodities	Louis Dreyfus	•		•
Private corporation	Lulu Group International	Lulu Group	•		

KEEPING QUESTIONABLE COMPANY: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MULTINATIONAL MEMBERS OF SAI, NVA AND FOLU

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CONTINUED

TABLE 1 | LIST OF TRANSNATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS OF NVA, FOLU AND SAI INITIATIVES CONTINUED

TYPE OF BODY	BODY	ACRONYMS IN FIGURE 5	NVA	FOLU	SAI
Private corporation	McKinsey & Company	McKinsey	•		
Private corporation	Nestlé	Nestlé	•	•	•
Private corporation	PepsiCo	PepsiCo	•		•
Private corporation	PJSC PhosAgro Russia	PhosAgro	•		
Private corporation	Reitan Group	Reitan	•		
Private corporation	SICPA Holding	SICPA	•		
Private corporation	Sinar Mas Agribusiness & Food	Sinar Mas	•		
Private corporation	Syngenta ChemChina	Syngenta ChemChina	•		
Private corporation	UPL Limited	UPL	•		
Private corporation	Swiss Reinsurance Company	Swiss Re	•		
Private corporation	Visy Industries Pty Ltd.	Visy Industries	•		
Private corporation	Walmart	Walmart	•		
Private corporation	Wesfarmers Limited	Wesfarmers	•		
Private corporation	Wilmar International	Wilmar	•		
Private corporation	DeLaval	DeLaval			•
Private corporation	Lely	Lely			•
Private corporation	NETAFIM irrigation	NETAFIM			•
Private corporation	FrieslandCampina	Campina			•
Private corporation	Royal Agrifirm Group	Agrifirm			•
Private corporation	Royal Cosun	Cosun			•
Private corporation	Fonterra	Fonterra			•
Private corporation	Arla	Arla			•
Private corporation	AB Sugar	AB Sugar			•
Private corporation	Archer Daniels Midland	ADM			•
Private corporation	Agrarfrost	Agrarfrost			•
Private corporation	AGRANA	AGRANA			•
Private corporation	AGROTERRA	AGROTERRA			•
Private corporation	Algoma Orchards Ltd.	Algoma			•
Private corporation	ANDRIANI	ANDRIANI			•
Private corporation	Barilla	Barilla			•
Private corporation	Barry Callebaut	Barry Callebaut			•
Private corporation	Biological Sources & Services	BiOS&S			•
Private corporation	Boortmalt	Boortmalt			•
Private corporation	C. Thywissen	Thywissen			•
Private corporation	CARBERY	CARBERY			•
Private corporation	Citrosuco	Citrosuco			•
Private corporation	Ebro	Ebro			•
Private corporation	Cristalco	Cristalco			•
Private corporation	CROP's	CROP's			•
Private corporation	Danone	Danone			•
Private corporation	DIAGEO	DIAGEO			•
Private corporation	Döhler	Döhler			•
Private corporation	European Rice Company	EURICOM			•
Private corporation	Ferrero	Ferrero			•
Private corporation	Firmenich	Firmenich			•
Private corporation	Givaudan	Givaudan			•

TABLE 1 LIST OF TRANSNATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS OF NVA, FOLU AND SAI INITIATIVES CONTINUED

TYPE OF BODY	BODY	ACRONYMS IN FIGURE 5	NVA	FOLU	SAI
Private corporation	Glanbia	Glanbia			•
Private corporation	Grünewald International	Grünewald			•
Private corporation	Barth-Haas Group	HAAS			•
Private corporation	Holland Malt	Holland Malt			•
Private corporation	Hopsteiner	Hopsteiner			•
Private corporation	Intersnack	Intersnack			•
Private corporation	Kalsec	Kalsec			•
Private corporation	Kellogg's	Kellogg's			•
Private corporation	KERRY	KERRY			•
Private corporation	Lamb Weston	Lamb Weston			•
Private corporation	MARS	MARS			•
Private corporation	McKain	McKain			•
Private corporation	McCormick	McCormick			•
Private corporation	McDonald's	McDonald's			•
Private corporation	Moy Park	Moy Park			•
Private corporation	Muntons	Muntons			•
Private corporation	Nomad Foods	Nomad			•
Private corporation	Nordzucker	Nordzucker			•
Private corporation	Orkla	Orkla			•
Private corporation	RB	RB			•
Private corporation	Riso Gallo	Gallo			•
Private corporation	SPSpA	SPSpA			•
Private corporation	Südzucker	Südzucker			•
Private corporation	Surexport Compañía Agraria, S.L.	Surexport			•
Private corporation	Symrise	Symrise			•
Private corporation	Wernsing	Wernsing			•
Private corporation	Yakima Chief	Yakima Chief			•
Private corporation	ABP Food Group	ABP			•
Private corporation	Agroalimentare Sud	Agroalimentare Sud			•
Private corporation	C.I.O. Consorzio Interregionale Ortofrutticoli	CIO			•
Private corporation	Dawn Meats	Dawn Meats			•
Private corporation	Inalca-Cremonini Group	Inalca			•
Private corporation	Farm Frites	Farm Frites			•
Private corporation	Ingredion	Ingredion			•
Private corporation	Kepak	Kepak			•
Private corporation	OSI	OSI			•
Private corporation	Vion Food Group	Vion			•
Private corporation	Ahold Delhaize	Ahold Delhaize			•
Private corporation	Marks & Spencer	M&S			•
Private corporation	Migros	Migros			•
Private corporation	Starbucks	Starbucks			•
Private corporation	TESCO	TESCO			•
Private corporation	ROQUETTE	ROQUETTE			•
Private corporation	Sucden	Sucden			•
Private corporation	Indofood Indonesia	Indofood	•		
Private corporation	GLOBALG.A.P.	GLOBALG.A.P			•

SOURCE: PREPARED BY AUTHORS BASED ON DATA FROM ORBIS, FOLU (2017, 2019B), FOLU-COLOMBIA (2018), SAI (2019E, 2019G), AND FEM (2010B, 2013, 2017, 2018B).

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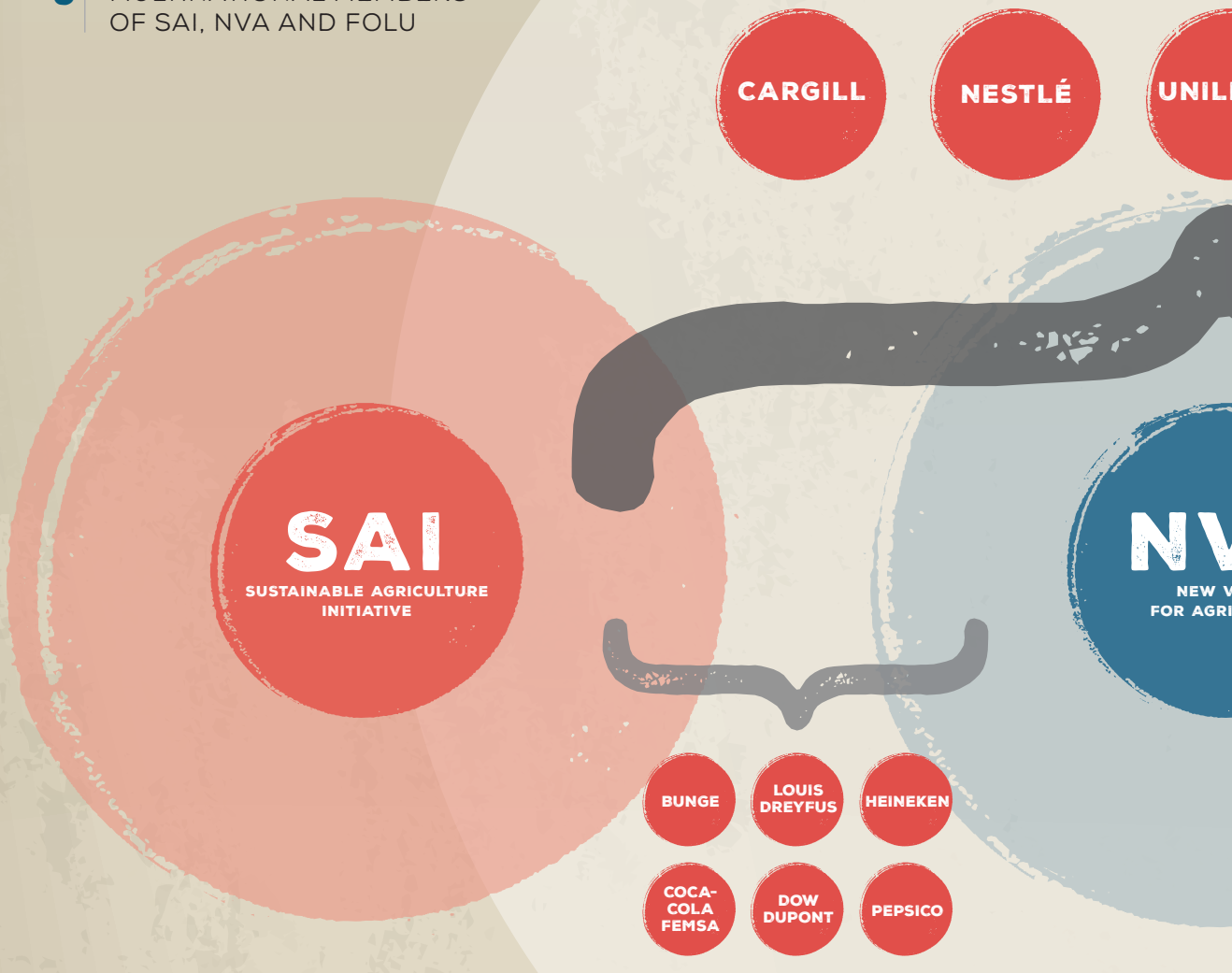
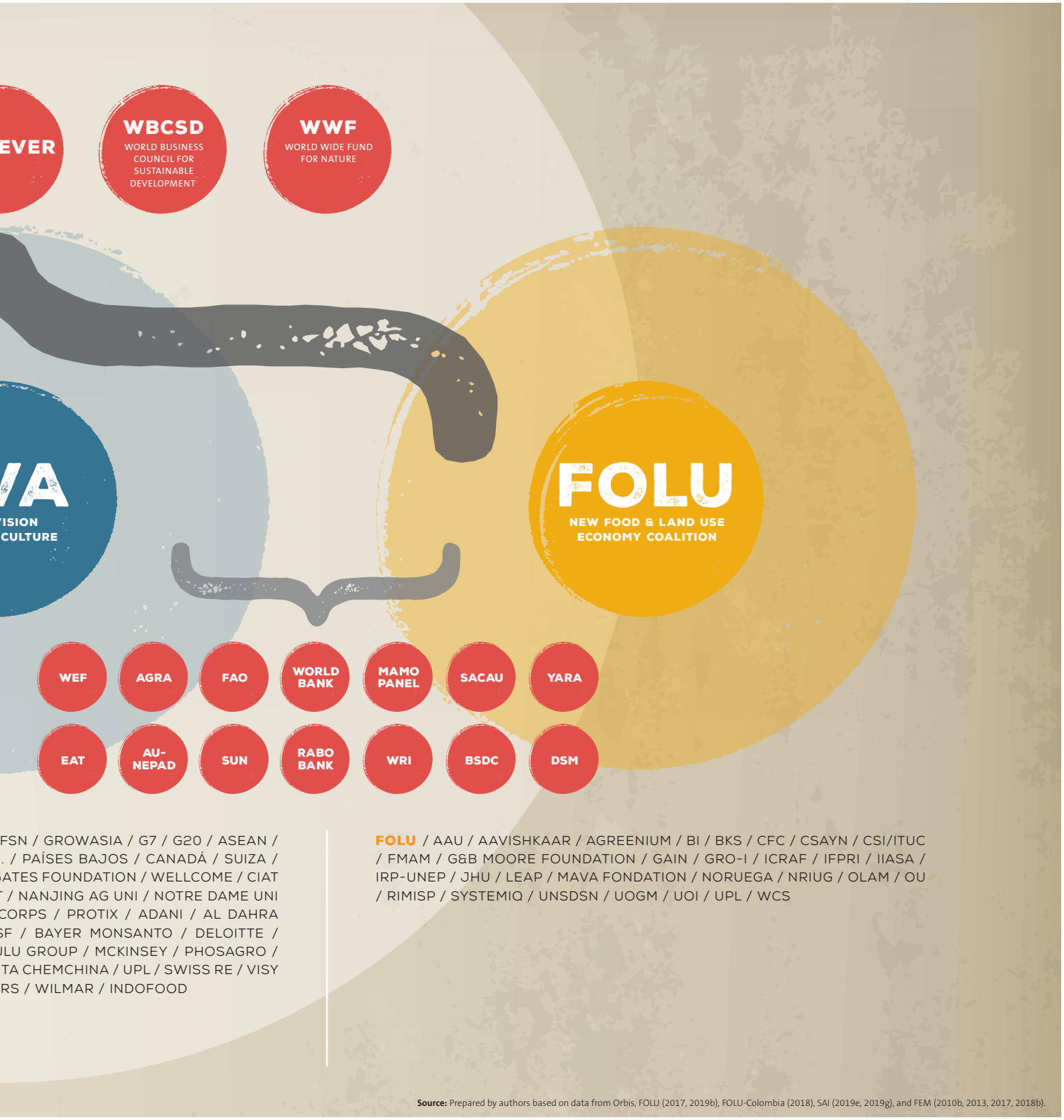
FIGURE 5 MULTINATIONAL MEMBERS OF SAI, NVA AND FOLU



SAI / SFLAB / AIM-PROGRESS / DSF / FIELD TO MARKET / AIJN / DELAVAL / LELY / NETAFIM / CAMPINA / AGRIFIRM / COSUN / FONTERRA / ARLA / AB SUGAR / ADM / AGRARFROST / AGRANA / AGROTERRA / ALGOMA / ANDRIANI / BARILLA / BARRY CALLEBAUT / BIOS&S / BOORTMALT / THYWISSEN / CARBERY / CITROSUCO / EBRO / CRISTALCO / CROP'S / DANONE / DIAGEO / DÖHLER / EURICOM / FERRERO / FIRMENICH / GIVAUDAN / GLANBIA / GRÜNEWALD / HAAS / HOLLAND MALT / HOPSTEINER / INTERSNACK / KALSEC / KELLOGG'S / KERRY / LAMB WESTON / MARS / MCKAIN / MCCORMICK / MCDONALD'S / MOY PARK / MUNTONS / NOMAD / NORDZUCKER / ORKLA / RB / GALLO / SPSPA / SÜDZUCKER / SUREXPORT / SYMRISE / WERNSING / YAKIMA CHIEF / ABP / AGROALIMENTARE SUD / CIO / DAWN MEATS / INALCA / FARM FRITES / INGREDION / KEPAK / OSI / VION / AHOLD DELHAIZE / M&S / MIGROS / STARBUCKS / TESCO / ROQUETTE / SUCDEN

NVA / FANRPAN / GROWAFRICA / NA ECOWAS / OMS / PMA / FIDA / EE.UU AUSTRALIA / AFDV / ROCKEFELLER / G / HARVARD / LEEDS UNI / TUFTS / MIT / CITY UNI LONDON / TNC / MERCY HOLDING / ANHEUSER-BUSCH / BAS EVONIK / HP / KIRIN / JM / KDDC / LU REITAN / SICPA / SINAR MAS / SYNGEN INDUSTRIES / WALMART / WESFARME

07



FSN / GROWASIA / G7 / G20 / ASEAN /
. / PAÍSES BAJOS / CANADÁ / SUIZA /
ATES FOUNDATION / WELLCOME / CIAT
/ NANJING AG UNI / NOTRE DAME UNI
CORPS / PROTIX / ADANI / AL DAHRA
F / BAYER MONSANTO / DELOITTE /
LU GROUP / MCKINSEY / PHOSAGRO /
TA CHEMCHINA / UPL / SWISS RE / VISY
RS / WILMAR / INDOFOOD

FOLU / AAU / AAVISHKAAR / AGREENIUM / BI / BKS / CFC / CSAYN / CSI/ITUC / FMAM / G&B MOORE FOUNDATION / GAIN / GRO-I / ICRAF / IFPRI / IIASA / IRP-UNEP / JHU / LEAP / MAVA FONDATION / NORUEGA / NRIUG / OLAM / OU / RIMISP / SYSTEMIQ / UNSDSN / UOGM / UOI / UPL / WCS

Source: Prepared by authors based on data from Orbis, FOLU (2017, 2019b), FOLU-Colombia (2018), SAI (2019e, 2019g), and FEM (2010b, 2013, 2017, 2018b).

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Table 1 and Figure 5 show a series of key actors that are part of two or three of the initiatives. Unilever, Cargill, Nestlé, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) are part of SAI, NVA and FOLU. Meanwhile Bunge, Dow DuPont, Louis Dreyfus, Heineken, Coca-Cola and PepsiCo are members of NVA and FOLU. And Rabobank, the Malabo Montpelier Panel (Mamo Panel), the AGRA, SUN and BSDC initiatives, the World Bank / IFC, the African Union, the South African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), EAT Foundation, the World Resources Institute (WRI), agrifood and seed companies DSM and Yara International, the government of Sweden and the World Economic Forum (WEF) are all part of the NVA and FOLU. The text boxes below highlight the specific perspectives of two corporations leading the sustainable intensification of agriculture with agroecological nuances, namely Cargill and Unilever.

Unilever and 'junk agroecology'

'We think there has to be a change in the nature of farming – and that the process of change will bring enormous opportunities' (Unilever, 2019c).

With a turnover of 51 billion euros in 2018 (Unilever, 2019a), Unilever is one of the global giants of fast moving consumer goods.[23] In this industry of heavyweights Unilever is, without question, the corporation to follow in terms of sustainability. Unilever chairs the board of directors of SAI and FOLU-FABLE, and is part of all of the boards of directors of the 'World Economic Forum's System Initiative on Shaping the Future of Food Security and Agriculture'. Since 2010, the 'Unilever Sustainable Living Plan' guides the sustainable growth strategy of the company in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and includes sourcing of sustainable agricultural raw materials. With reference to this, since 2019 Unilever has had its own 'Sustainable Agriculture Code' (Unilever, 2010), in line with the principles of sustainable intensification of agriculture with agroecological overtones. For Unilever, 'sustainable farming methods have the potential to increase farmers' yields considerably, mitigate the effects of climate change and provide farmers, their families and their surrounding communities with opportunities to build more prosperous societies – so they can contribute to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The business benefits are clear. Sourcing sustainably helps secure our supplies and reduces risk and volatility in our raw material supply chains. It opens up opportunities for innovation: by focusing on people's sustainable living needs and consumer preference, we build stronger brands' (Unilever, 2019b).

At the same time, Unilever, with the collaboration of bodies such as UN Women and Oxfam, published the 2017 report 'Opportunities for women: Challenging harmful social norms and gender stereotypes to unlock women's potential'. In this report, the CEO of Unilever claims that 'tackling gender inequality [...] requires a holistic approach, from equal pay and representation in our workforce to supporting female smallholder farmers in our supply chain, and ultimately to how we represent our brands to consumers through removing gender stereotypes' (Unilever, 2017, p. 3). In terms of the support to female small-scale food producers, the multinational company set as a goal 'to empower 5 million women in our value chain by 2020 via programmes focused on promoting rights and safety, building skills and capabilities, and creating economic opportunity through jobs and livelihoods'. (Unilever, 2017, p. 5). And 'the business case for Unilever is clear. It is reported that women control 64% of consumer spending and are the fastest-growing group of consumers in the world today' (Unilever, 2017, p. 6).

23 With others, such as Nestlé and Procter & Gamble. Founded in 1871 and present in 190 countries, Unilever is a consumer goods multinational company that claims that 'seven out of every ten households around the world contain at least one Unilever product' (Unilever, 2019a).

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Cargill and 'junk agroecology'

'This is about continuing to increase productivity while protecting the planet' (Vice-president of Cargill, at Cargill, 2019d).

With total revenues amounting to 103,888 million Euros in 2018 (Cargill, 2019a), Cargill is one of the four global corporate agrifood giants.[24] Cargill took as its own the challenge of 'increasing global food security in the midst of climate change' (Cargill, 2019b). It interprets this as the need to reorganise global agricultural production such that 'the right crops are grown in the most productive places'(*ibid.*) and the global trade of food and agricultural commodities is increased and 'moves from places of abundance to places of scarcity'(*ibid.*).

To this end, Cargill advocates for 'policies, technology and investments to drive innovation' (Cargill, 2019c). For this, Cargill argues that it is necessary to innovate 'in large- and small-scale production. Science must continue to play a role in improving productivity. The truth is we can feed the world without relying on GM technology. We just shouldn't. The consequences for land use, water use, and greenhouse gas emissions would be too high, especially as we adapt to hotter, drier climates and need more drought- and heat-tolerant crops. Cargill will continue to source GM crops because they are critically important to sustainably nourishing a global population' (*ibid.*).

Table 3 below shows that 'junk agroecology' is a flagship not only for big agribusinesses, but also for the main actors of the chemical industry, transnational corporations that produce consumer goods, big supermarket chains, universities, international financial capital, United Nations bodies, several states around the world, philanthropic entities and large development and conservation NGOs.

TABLE 2 MULTINATIONAL MEMBERS OF SAI, NVA AND FOLU, BY TYPE OF ORGANISATION

TYPE OF ENTITY ASSOCIATED	NVA	FOLU	SAI
Coalition of States	6%	1%	0%
Public-private alliance	9%	8%	3%
Business coalition	2%	4%	6%
Private corporation	45%	11%	89%
Private bank	2%	1%	0%
Private donor	4%	6%	0%
Public donor	7%	4%	0%
Private funder	0%	3%	0%
Public funder	0%	1%	0%
International financial institution	2%	1%	0%
Research NGO	1%	4%	0%
Research UN	1%	6%	0%
Research academics	9%	33%	0%
NGO	4%	6%	1%
UN	6%	6%	1%
Social organization	0%	1%	0%
Union	1%	3%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

SOURCE: PREPARED BY AUTHORS BASED ON DATA FROM ORBIS, SAI (2019E, 2019G), FEM (2010B, 2013, 2017, AND 2018B) AND FOLU (2019B).

In addition to the economic and political power of these three initiatives, and as already mentioned above, Table 2 shows how these research bodies represent up to 43% of the multinational members of FOLU, while transnational corporations are the ones that take the lead in SAI and NVA. However, despite serving private economic interests, both SAI and especially NVA receive public funds.

Agribusiness data collection analysis on potato plants.
© Andrii Yalanskyi / Shutterstock

24 Together with Archer Daniels Midland, Bunge and Louis Dreyfus, Cargill is part of the powerful agribusiness group known as the ABCD, due to the initials of their corporate names. Founded in 1865, Cargill works in the sectors of food, agriculture, finance and industry in over 125 countries.

CONCLUSIONS AND INSIGHTS FOR AN AGROECOLOGY THAT IS TRUE TO ITS VISION

OF ECOSYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY AND ITS ROOTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

08

Local women removing husks from corn, Bantaeng, South Sulawesi, Indonesia.
© Sony Herdiana / Shutterstock

In the current conjuncture of converging global crises, and under the umbrella of public-private partnership initiatives such as SAI, NVA and FOLU, the main global agrifood corporations are seeking to redress their worst socio-ecological impacts through the adoption of a model of sustainable agricultural intensification with agroecological nuances. This model seeks merely to introduce some required reforms in order to safeguard the current agrifood and corporate and industrial natural resource use systems from itself. The end goal of these reforms is to ensure that big business can continue profiting, without fundamentally transforming either the unjust socio-economic, political and ecological relations on which the agrifood system is based, or the exclusionary and short-sighted ideology that legitimises it.

For the purposes of 'changing everything so that nothing changes', transnational agrifood corporations find, in agroecology, a menu of extremely useful solutions that they have decided to selectively integrate into their agro-industrial model. This does not entail a complete assimilation of the agroecological approach or its vision of food sovereignty by big agrifood business interests. Rather, it represents a selective, strategic corporate capture of some of the goals, discourses and practices of agroecology, of the spaces where public policies are discussed, and of the funds available for the transition to sustainable agriculture. In short, we are witnessing the development and imposition of a 'junk' version of agroecology.

08

In their crusade for 'junk agroecology,' SAI, NVA and FOLU deploy their considerable media, political and market influence to shape the social and political imaginary regarding what kind of changes in the current agrifood and natural resource use system are desirable and possible. However, they are prey to three major obsessions in this endeavour. The first is a technological-productivist obsession; the second is with the market and global value chains; and the third is with a model of private governance driven by the rationale of 'you are worth as much as you own'.

In keeping with the statement of the peoples' organisations that took part in the Nyéléni Forum, affirming that 'Agroecology is a political issue.' (2015, 4), we cannot end without advancing a series of insights on the ways in which the organisations collaborating on this report believe that the transition to sustainable agriculture should take place. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that corporations are for-profit actors. Thus, the decisions about which kind of innovations and approaches are necessary for the transition to equitable and sustainable agrifood and natural resource use systems cannot be in their hands.

This transition must go hand in hand with public policies that: i) grant a central role in their design and implementation to small-scale food producers and rural and urban workers. They are the ones who have made agroecology possible with their labour, day by day and for generations, and therefore have the knowledge both to establish the innovation and technological development needs required within the framework of the principles of agroecological systems, and the ability to contribute to meeting them; ii) are consistent with the various national and international legal instruments, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, and; iii) favour an agroecology that is true to its vision of ecosystem sustainability and its roots in social and environmental justice.

Efforts to promote women's rights within food systems are important. However, further work needs to be done in terms of designing and investing in public policies aimed at equitable distribution of wealth, wages, tasks and decision-making. Implementing campaigns against all forms of violence and oppression against women is an urgent and necessary step, even for the advancement of agroecology.

Likewise, in the face of a growing global urban population, the return of young people to the countryside is a priority for social and environmental sustainability. This won't be possible without developing and implementing policies that encourage returning, remaining and working in agro-ecological systems, on the basis of training and participation of young people.

There is also increasing recognition of the urgent need for systemic responses to the climate crisis. However, the persistence and expansion of the agro-industrial production model, coupled with market-based policies to reduce emissions, which in some cases seek to commodify traditional and/or agro-ecological forms of agricultural production, are merely further entrenching the root causes that have led to the current crisis. The promotion of 'junk agroecology' initiatives opens up the possibility of greater 'greenwashing' of socially and environmentally destructive forms of production.

In short, there is an urgent need to build participatory public policies for the development, promotion and implementation of agroecology for the benefit of all people, and especially small-scale food producers and rural and urban workers. This is the model of agroecology – by and for the peoples of the planet — that would make it possible to improve the existing poor conditions – in terms of sustainability and environmental, economic and social justice — that prevail in the agrifood sector, as well as in society and the production system as a whole.

Farmers working
in their village gardens
of Cyeza, Muhanga, Rwanda.
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‘JUNK AGROECOLOGY’:

THE CORPORATE CAPTURE OF AGROECOLOGY FOR A PARTIAL ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION WITHOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE

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