

# **Farmers, Universities, Governments, DO NOT BE MISLED!**

## **World Agricultural Forum: Nothing but a Corporate Lobby group**

*When the Theme of the conference is “Reshaping agriculture for a Sustainable Future: Focus on Small Farmholders,” and the name of the organizer is “World Agricultural Forum”, many of us expect that this is a genuine global forum working for the interests of small farmers. But we have found that the TRUTH is the opposite. Hence all farmer unions of Andhra Pradesh have come together to issue this pamphlet to expose the true picture to everyone, especially to farmers and their well-wishers. We also strongly urge that governments and universities should not associate with such corporate lobby groups.*

### **What is the World Agricultural Forum?**

The World Agricultural Forum (WAF) is a body started by some of the biggest agri-business MNCs such as Monsanto, to influence governments and policy-makers across the world. Its aim seems to be to “reshape agriculture” to suit the interests of the big corporations. It is based in St.Louis in the U.S. which also has the Headquarters of Monsanto, and most of its Board members are corporate stalwarts from companies based in that area. (See box.)

WAF was first launched in 1997 with the initiative of Leonard Guarraia who was C.E.O. of the American Soybean Association, a powerful lobby group of soybean industry. Dr. Ken Baker who is the Chairman of WAF, was earlier Director of Government Affairs at Monsanto, and his major achievement was getting approval for Genetically Modified (GM) soybean in the European Union.

Since 2001, WAF holds its “Congress” every two years, inviting policy maker, government officials and research institutions from various countries in order to influence their policies in their favour.

The first 5 Congresses until 2009 all happened in St.Louis and the 2011 Congress in Belgium. Selected officials and opinion-makers from other countries were drawn in, including the Chief Minister and Agriculture Minister of A.P. in 2007.

### **Who sponsors WAF?**

WAF is financially supported by corporate groups like Kellogg Foundation, Monsanto, Nestle, Tyson foods, Gates Foundation and D1 Oils, along with World Bank and IFPRI. Even more MNCs have lined up to sponsor the biennial WAF Congresses.

*All this is not a secret. This is a clear strategy of large MNCs to create “neutral forums” which appear to be for public interest. The problem is with governments and public research bodies knowingly or unknowingly playing into their hands giving them legitimacy.*

### **Who is Directing WAF?**

#### **WAF Board of Directors straight from MNCs**

To understand the origins of World Agricultural Forum and who is driving the Forum, let us look at the Board of Directors and their past and present connections with large Agri-Business MNCs. Like WAF, many of these are based in St.Louis city (USA), starting with the notorious Monsanto!

- **Monsanto:** HQ in St.Louis. Dr. Kenneth Baker, Chairman of WAF, was Director of Government Affairs in Monsanto, i.e. helping them lobby with the government. Another WAF Board member is a Director at Monsanto.
- **American Soybean Association:** WAF founder, Leonard Guarraia, was the CEO of the powerful lobby group of soybean industry, HQ in St.Louis.
- **Novus International:** Large animal industry MNC, formerly the animals division of Monsanto! The CFO of WAF, David Friedman is the Controller of Novus. Another Director of WAF, Tricia Beal is Chief of Staff at Novus!
- **BASF:** The world’s largest chemical MNC! A big agri-chemical manufacturer, its head of “government affairs” is a Director of WAF.
- **Anheuser-Busch:** Largest American beer company, also HQ in St.Louis, now heavily into biofuels. Its Vice President is a Director of WAF.
- **Bunge NA:** One of world’s largest agri-business MNCs. Ex-VP of Bunge is now a WAF Director.

Out of the 13 Board members of WAF, 8 Directors come directly from these corporate groups. Others may have indirect connections.

World Agricultural Forum is their vehicle to influence government policies around the world.

## **WAF Congress 2013: Corporate Sponsors setting the Agenda**

**Corporate Sponsors:** Bayer Crop Science (Platinum Sponsor), which is one of the world's largest manufacturers of Genetically Modified crops and pesticides, Monsanto, Novozymes, (Danish biotech MNC), Foodpolis, (Korean agri-business conglomerate), Jain Irrigation Systems (Indian company of drip and sprinkler systems), Novus International (animal industry MNC offshoot of Monsanto), US Soybean Export Council, BASF (world's largest chemical MNC), United Phosphorus (India's largest agro-chemical company).

Not surprisingly, the agenda is also dominated by them. CEO of Bayer is delivering the keynote address on Day 1 on 'Why we need a new revolution in agriculture'. Bayer is also sponsoring a plenary Roundtable on 'Partnering solutions for Smallholder farmers'! Similarly we have keynote speeches by V.P. of Novozymes, CEO of Novus International, President of Royal DSM N.V. and M.D. of Standard Chartered Bank. Roundtables feature officials from Monsanto, Adani Wilmar, US Soybean Export Council, BASF, ITC, etc.

These are the people at WAF setting directions to world agriculture on "Sustainable future for small farmholders", "Talent and Opportunities to feed the World", "Development of bio-based economy", etc!

## **Misplaced Priorities: Partnership of government and agricultural university**

What makes WAF 2013 notable is that for the first time, a government has joined the corporate lobby group as co-organizer of the World Agricultural Forum Congress. Though the Congress is titled "Reshaping agriculture for a Sustainable Future: Focus on Small Farmholders", it is clear from the agenda that it is dominated by big agri-business MNCs promoting their own "solutions" to the world's agriculture related problems.

The statements by the A.P. state government such as, "The WAF is the only neutral, inclusive forum that allows for comprehensive discussion and examination of current and developing domestic and global agricultural policy" show that the government has a wrong understanding of what this forum is about. With participation fees set at Rs.11,400 per head, it is clear that farmers are not welcome!

Several farmer unions urged that the A.P. government should distance itself from WAF and its corporate-driven agenda. The government acknowledged the genuine concerns and while it cannot withdraw at this stage, it assured the farmer unions that they will not adopt policies favoring the large corporations.

## **Dangerous Trend: Government giving legitimacy to corporate lobby groups**

Speaking in a united voice, all the farmer unions of Andhra Pradesh urge the government not to associate with such corporate bodies in the future. There was a similar situation in 2012 when there was a conference in New Delhi, organized by the biotech industry lobby group ABLE and seed industry lobby group NSAI, on ensuring Food Security for the nation. The Union Ministry of Agriculture joined as co-organizer of this conference and it was inaugurated by the President of India. Once the government is involved, all the universities and ICAR organizations get involved, and form partnerships.

From the experience of other countries, this is the tactic of the corporations to gain legitimacy and start dictating the agriculture policies and research agenda – in the guise of helping small farmers.

We farmer unions jointly appeal to the farming community, government institutions and the public not to be misled by such Forums which promote policies which harm the small farmholders and the environment and pave way for corporate domination of agriculture, while gaining public legitimacy through involvement of governments and public universities.

**Issued jointly by:** A.P. Kisan Congress, A.P. Rythu Sangham, Bharatiya Kisan Morcha, A.P. Ryotu Sangham, Telugu Rythu, Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, Rythu Swarajya Vedika.

**Contact:** Vissa Kirankumar, Rythu Swarajya Vedika. 9701705743, kiranvissa@gmail.com