



Stopping the FAO–CropLife #ToxicAlliance

Small-scale farmers, food producers, agricultural workers and food sovereignty activists around the world are working to change the way we produce our food so that it doesn't harm people, living beings and the planet. These efforts are now under threat.

In October 2020, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced its intent to formally partner with CropLife International, the trade association for the pesticide and biotechnology industries. The following month, we delivered a letter to the Director General of FAO, signed by more than 350 organizations across the globe, urging him to reject this dangerous alliance.

We've kept the pressure on FAO ever since. Working with our PAN International partners and allied networks, we've held three global days of action, organized funder opposition, garnered media and social media coverage, and elevated our campaign in the global counter-mobilizations against the UN Food Systems Summit. We also directly requested a meeting with FAO's Director General Qu Dongyu to discuss our concerns.

FAO has not responded. So, on December 3 — which is International Day of No Pesticide Use, in memory of the 1984 Bhopal tragedy — we're organizing a Global Day of Action to Stop the #ToxicAlliance. We'll deliver our petition to FAO with over 175,000 signatures from around the world urging them to say "No" to a CropLife partnership.

Why is this alliance so toxic?

An alliance between FAO and CropLife International makes no sense at all. It would tie the UN agency that's charged with reducing hunger and supporting farmers to manufacturers of harmful pesticides and unsustainable technologies. The petition we're delivering explains the problem well:

CropLife's sole purpose is to advocate for use of its members' products — which are both antiquated chemical solutions and techno-fixes (genetically modified seeds) that lock farmers into ever-escalating use of pesticides.... A partnership with CropLife undercuts your agency's critical — and urgently needed — support for agroecology, which FAO itself notes "can support food production and food security and nutrition while restoring the ecosystem services and biodiversity that are essential for sustainable agriculture."

CropLife members include the largest agrichemical companies in the world: BASF, Bayer Crop Science, Corteva Agriscience, FMC and Syngenta. They make more than one-third of their sales income from Highly Hazardous Pesticides — those that are most harmful to human health and the environment. Their primary aim is to maximize sales of their products.

Our campaign's demands

FAO must instead promote policies to increase farmer access to practices and tools that help them grow their crops sustainably without harming their health or the environment.

continued on back page



Inside This Issue

Ag Policy, Billboards & Labor Strikes p. 2
Meet Ilang-Ilang Quijano p. 3

Ag Policy, Billboards & Labor Strikes: It's All Political

by Ahna Kruzic, Communications & Media Director

Agriculture is political. I think about it often, and I'm thinking about it especially as I visit family and friends back home in Iowa, one of the many chemical-intensive agriculture "bellies of the beast."

I see representations of the politics of food and agriculture everywhere — from a landscape blanketed in monocropped corn and soy, to billboards featuring messages about farmers "feeding the world." So how is that political?

Agriculture is political in the obvious ways — the people we elect make laws relating to everything from food access to crop insurance. But the politics of agriculture aren't just about electoral politics. It's about the distribution of power, too. And our agricultural system distributes land, money, and power into the hands of fewer and fewer white families and the corporations they own. This started with land stolen from Indigenous people and given to white men and their families, and continues today. Half of all U.S. farms made less than \$300 profit in 2019, while wealth continues to concentrate in the corporate boardrooms of distributors, processors, and seed and chemical companies.

So back to those billboards featuring messages about feeding the world... How are they political? Because they tell stories that are used to justify keeping things the way they are. Billboards describing what's really happening just wouldn't be compelling — or as comfortable. How about... "Pesticides are drifting!" "Polluted water is here!" or "Farmers are struggling!"? These reality-based messages wouldn't exactly give people the warm fuzzies while driving across the state, seeing landscapes characterized by soil loss, erosion, and decreasing biodiversity. Feeding the world, though? That's something people can get behind — and so the story continues.

Stories that divide us

Billboards aren't the only way those who stand to benefit from this system maintain power through story. Stories are often used to divide those of us who aren't getting our fair share. That's because if we stood together, the power of more people across sectors could shift politics in agricultural systems more broadly.

These divisions are fabricated, but they have very real implications.

For example, I've seen these deliberately engineered divisions in the coverage of the United Auto Workers (UAW) strikes at the John Deere manufacturing plants. Workers are striking for fair wages in the midst of precedent-setting profits at the corporate level. National news coverage has focused on agricultural associations' concern regarding tractor part shortages and how this could affect farmers' bottom lines.

But the fact is, many farmers are united in belief that just as they deserve fair compensation for their labor as farmers, workers at John Deere deserve fair compensation, too. They know that this level of corporate power in agriculture is unacceptable either way:

"Concentration in machinery manufacturing and the increasing disparity in compensation between workers and managers makes the current negotiations critical for the fair treatment of current and future workers. As Iowa farmers, we know a healthy

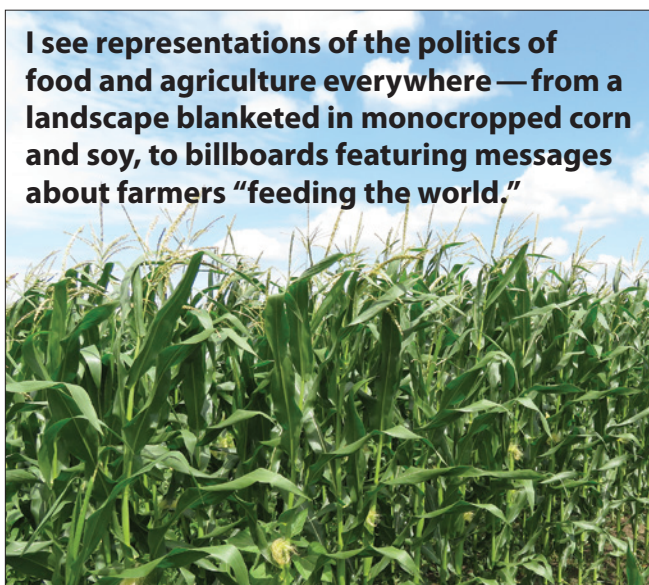
agriculture system requires all parts of that system to be fairly and equitably compensated. The UAW action sets an important example of the power of workers standing together for a common goal."

— Iowa Farmers Union Board of Directors, Nov. 9, 2021

So how do we counter the stories that maintain politics as they are in our agricultural system? We tell our own. Our politics and stories must disrupt not just the homogeneity of crops on our landscapes, but also the homogeneity of power characterizing our agriculture system. Farmers and communities across the U.S. are already disrupting agriculture as we know it; the stories are right in front of us.

From the Iowa Farmers Union standing in solidarity with the UAW's strike at John Deere, to rural and Indigenous advocates in Minnesota working in coalition toward a justice-oriented food and farm system, the stories are endless.

What's yours? —



I see representations of the politics of food and agriculture everywhere — from a landscape blanketed in monocropped corn and soy, to billboards featuring messages about farmers "feeding the world."

Meet PANAP's Ilang-Ilang Quijano

We recently chatted with PAN Asia Pacific's communications officer Ilang-Ilang Quijano, based in Manila, Philippines, to learn more about her background, current work, and vision for the future of food and farming.

How long have you been involved with PAN? What were you doing before?

I have been PAN Asia Pacific's communications officer since 2019. Before that, I was working as an editor and multimedia producer for Altermidya, a non-profit media organization in the Philippines covering social movements.

What brought you to your work with PAN? Do you have a background in food and farming?

My involvement with PAN dates back to two decades ago when my father, toxicologist Dr. Romeo Quijano, asked me to co-author an investigative story on pesticide poisoning of villagers in a banana plantation company in Davao del Sur, Mindanao (Southern Philippines). I was a university student at that time, and it was my first article published in a national daily newspaper. We were sued for libel by the company — the case dragged on for more than a decade, and sparked a local and global campaign against aerial spraying of pesticides.

That launched my interest in advocacy journalism, which became a main focus for me. I covered farmers' issues extensively, especially their struggle for land reform and against neoliberal globalization. At the same time, I was involved in PANAP— mostly through writing and photography (e.g. documenting human rights and environmental fact-finding missions), as well as spearheading media work for events such as the Permanent People's Tribunal on Agrochemical TNCs in Bangalore, India. I've also made video documentaries, including one on the poisoning of ex-workers of the International Rice Research Institute headquartered in the Philippines (IRRI was the launching pad of the Green Revolution).

What current PAN work or campaigns are you energized around?

I'm currently co-coordinating a campaign with PAN North America's Organizing Co-Director Simone Adler to

stop the FAO's egregious partnership with CropLife International, the association and lobby group of the world's biggest pesticide manufacturers.

I think the corporate capture of the UN and other international institutions is cause for alarm and will greatly impact our work trying to eliminate hazardous pesticides.

Is there a recent achievement or progress in your work that you'd like to share?

I was on the communications team of the Global People's Summit on Food Systems — the Global South's counter-summit to the corporate-led UN Food Systems Summit—for a good part of the year. I saw how small farmers and rural peoples across the world are pushing back against neoliberal policies that devastate their lives and livelihoods. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, so many have been inspiring, organizing and mobilizing to reclaim the future of farming.

What does your vision of a healthy, just food and farming system look like?

A food system that works for the people and the planet should first and foremost be free from the interests of private capital. As long as corporations run the world, we can never have control over what kind of food is grown and how. In the Global South, peasants are increasingly losing land and access to resources. A healthy, just food system is one where people fully control the means of production and are liberated from the rules of capitalism. —



ABOUT PAN PAN works to create a just, thriving food system, working with those on the frontlines to tackle the pesticide problem — and reclaim the future of food and farming. One of five regional centers worldwide, PAN North America links local and international consumer, labor, health, environment and agriculture groups into an international citizens' action network. Together, we challenge the global proliferation of pesticides, defend basic rights to health and environmental quality, and work to ensure the transition to a just and viable food system.

Sustain PAN's Work Give Monthly



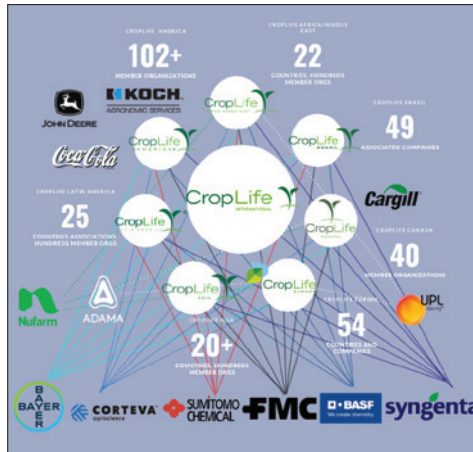
When you join PAN as a Sustainer, you become part of a vital group that donates each month to fund grassroots science, collaboration with frontline communities, and policy change. We rely on consistent support from Sustainers to work towards a healthy, fair and resilient system of food and farming.

Become a Sustainer today by going to www.panna.org/give-monthly.

Organizing Co-Director Simone Adler is co-coordinating the global campaign with Ilang-Ilang Quijano of PAN Asia Pacific (see p. 3 for a profile of Ilang). With a core group of 11 partner organizations, the campaign is pressing for two simple things:

1. FAO must sever its partnership with CropLife International.
2. FAO must implement a policy to prevent conflicts of interest.

For years, we've seen how the pesticide industry exerts an enormous amount of pressure and influence on governments that move to protect the people and environment from pesticide harms. It



See larger image on our Instagram page: @PesticideAction

played a key role in Thailand's decision to overturn an earlier ban on cancer-causing glyphosate, and CropLife actively lobbied U.S. officials to pressure Mexico to overturn their glyphosate ban earlier this year.

The FAO–CropLife #ToxicAlliance exemplifies the deeper problem of corporate capture in national and global governance, which is why stopping this formal partnership will be a significant victory in this struggle. To safeguard the health and well-being of people and the planet, the pesticide industry must not be allowed to hold sway at FAO. —

SPREAD THE WORD: Follow us on social media @pesticideaction and @PANAsiaPacific to get updates and announcements of future actions. Use the hashtag #ToxicAlliance for social media posts, and tag the @FAO and @FAODG to make sure your voice is heard!

FOR MORE INFO: Check out our campaign page at pan-international.org/stop-fao-croplife-toxicalliance.

Gretta Goldenman: PAN founder and longtime supporter

As part of her work with Food First in 1982, Gretta sent 500 copies of the book *Circle of Poison* to activist organizations around the world. The book documented how pesticides banned in the U.S. were being exported to developing countries. Gretta used the book to urge groups in the global North and South to find ways to work together to solve this international problem.

This led to a gathering in Penang, Malaysia, that marked the founding of PAN International. Monica Moore, David Chatfield and David Weir joined Gretta in taking on the task of starting PAN North America.

Gretta calls this experience of working with colleagues from around the world “life-changing.” She went back to school to study law and public policy,

with a focus on global environmental issues. She moved to Brussels in the 1990s to set up a public policy consultancy, with a particular focus on legal frameworks to address chemicals. Before her recent retirement, she led a project on how the EU could achieve a non-toxic environment.

I support PAN because it continues to do outstanding work to protect people and the environment from harmful chemicals, and to build a fairer, more equitable and sustainable food system aimed at feeding people, rather than corporate profits.

Gretta Goldenman



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