

# GMO Bio-Imperialism

## [GMO Bio-Imperialism](#)

by [Dr. Vandana Shiva](#), [Navdanya International](#)

April 26, 2024

Over the past few decades, GMO crops have been imposed in countries around the world, touted as a solution to food insecurity and malnutrition crises. However, hunger, disease and malnutrition have increased, while biodiversity has declined and toxins have spread. GMO imperialism has destroyed the lives and livelihoods of small farmers and biodiversity in the centers of origin. These centers of biodiversity origin are the cradles of the world's food supply and protection against disease, climate challenges, natural disasters or other obstacles to food production.

In Mexico, which is the center of origin of corn, there has been a long struggle by society and organized communities against GMO imperialism which threatens the subsistence and culture of local peoples. It is following this mobilization that the Mexican society obtained a ban on planting genetically modified corn through a collective lawsuit brought against the companies Bayer-Monsanto, Syngenta and Corteva Agriscience. This ban is still in effect.

Recently, the Mexican government issued an executive order phasing out the use of glyphosate and banning the use of genetically modified corn in tortillas, a staple food. Faced with this decision, the US government, on the basis of the United States-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement (USMCA), activated the dispute resolution mechanism with the aim of canceling the order and forcing the introduction of GMOs into the country.

The Mexican government as well as the non-governmental organizations from Mexico presented their Technical Opinions before this Panel, based on detailed scientific evidence, including new found evidence by Mexico's scientific advisory board CONAHCYT, rooted in scientifically rigorous evidence from academic institutions. This evidence pointed out and warned about the multiple risks that make it pertinent and urgent to stop the presence of genetically manipulated maize in the food of the Mexican population, and as raw material for other industries.

**From 12 to 16 March 2024**, Navdanya International, together with Latin American partners and the Mexican Government, organized a series of events in Mexico City to build a common strategy against the imposition of new and old GMOs. The mobilization in Mexico City counted on the presence of representatives of Latin American movements such as Argentina, Colombia, Bolivia, Costa Rica and others, in collaboration with Mexican civil society organizations, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Culture. It was at the Ministry of Culture that the Garden of Milpa, the biodiverse traditional farming system of Mexico, was blessed at the Museum of Corn.

**The case of Mexico represents** the attempt of a people to protect their biodiverse cultures, their thousand-year-old food heritage, the health of their population and ecosystems. It is the case of a people who demand respect for their sovereignty and represents a beacon of hope for the places where this imposition continues. People have the right to have sovereignty over their health, and that starts with food sovereignty.

**However, the GMO agenda** has always been about patents and profits, not food and health. Food sovereignty is a high-level concept, because it implies the sovereignty of beings to manage and organize themselves and protect their right to

health. This is why the goal of industrial agriculture has always been to push farmers off the land. It is inherent in the very definition of industrial agriculture. The sovereignty of people, farmers and nature has been violated by the imposition of agrotoxins, GMOs and ultra-processed foods, destroying diversity and ancient food cultures and threatening land, water and biodiversity.

**Agribusiness and biotechnology giants** are trying to circumvent existing biosafety regulations, such as the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols of the Convention on Biological Diversity, by subtly making changes to GMO regulations, in order to promote GMOs under new acronyms, such as NBT (New Breeding Techniques), NGT (New Genomic Techniques) or TEA (Techniques of Assisted Evolution). These new GMOs have been silently inserted into the agricultural legislation in force in various countries, with the aim of maintaining patent monopolies in the hands of the chemical and biotechnology giants.

**Today, our seed sovereignty is threatened** by intellectual property rights and new GMO technologies that have transformed seeds from a common good into a commodity under the control and monopoly of multinational agri-food companies. Impositions continue to take place, violating the sovereignty and rights of people and nature, in furtherance of the corporate agenda. While multinationals get rich by stealing our biodiversity. Faced with this, building relationships, based on common struggle and the vision of an ecological future, contributes to creating international networks of resistance and solidarity. Together, as global citizens, we must unite to oppose the bullying of GMOs and defend our seeds.

**Citizens are rising up** against the unscientific, anti-democratic and anti-ecological imposition of GMOs by multinationals and the US government. The first generation of GMOs failed. But multinationals continue to impose genetically modified organisms, or new GMOs, in centers of diversity. They continue to shift the narrative towards framing nature and

biodiversity as commodities to be commercialized and monopolized. In the wake of Mexico's battle against the United States, it is necessary to support and strengthen international solidarity against the corporate imposition of industrial food systems.

[Connect with Dr. Vandana Shiva](#)

*Cover image credit: [Nguyen\\_Khac](#)*

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# Bio-imperialism vs. Bio-diversity

[Bio-imperialism vs. Bio-diversity](#)

by [Navdanya International](#)

April 15, 2024

## Global Context: Seeds and GMOs

Seeds are emblematic of the connections between our lives, our food, our health and our freedom. They are the first link in the food chain. They embody our heritage and enfold the future evolution of life. The cultivation of seeds and their free exchange among farmers is the core foundation of our biodiversity and our food security. To have control over seeds is to have control over our lives, our food and our freedom.

Bio-imperialism severely threatens this freedom today through intellectual property rights. Old and new GMO technologies that have transformed seeds from a commons shared by farmers,

to a commodity under the control and monopoly of agribusiness corporations. This imperialism seeks to appropriate the world's seeds, destroying the lives and livelihoods of peasant communities, as well as biodiversity, but more seriously, in territories recognized as centers of origin. These centers of origin of biodiversity are the cradles of the world's food supply, and the protection against plague, climate challenges, natural disasters or other hindrances to food production.

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Also read: [Resisting GMO Imperialism – Events in Mexico – March 2024](#)

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Over the last few decades, GMO crops have been imposed in countries all over the world, advertised as a solution to food insecurity and the malnutrition crisis. However, hunger, disease and malnutrition have increased, while biodiversity has declined and toxins have spread. Corporations have forced the introduction of genetically manipulated seeds to impose Food Imperialism through various tools such as regulatory frameworks for intellectual property of seeds, such as UPOV 91, and other legal mechanisms like Trade Dispute Settlement Panels. GMO imperialism has destroyed the lives and livelihoods of small farmers and biodiversity around the world and especially in these centers of origin.

Most recently, agribusiness and biotech giants are attempting to bypass existing biosafety regulations, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity's Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols by quietly making changes to GMO regulation around the world, in order to promote these new GMOs under new acronyms, such as NBTs (New Breeding Techniques), NGTs (New Genomic Techniques), or TEAs (Techniques of Assisted Evolution). These new GMOs have been silently dovetailing into different countries' existing agricultural legislation, with

the aim still being patent monopolies in the hands of the big chemical and biotechnology giants.

This deregulation would allow gene edited crops to:

- Be commercialized with no environmental or consumption safety testing
- Require no labeling
- Have little to no traceability
- Be free from public disclosure of gene edited organisms
- Mass deregulation
- Be patented without disclosure

These new GMOs are leaving farmers, and citizens completely in the dark as to what is in their food and are an attempt to subvert sovereign governments, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and biosafety laws, with their imposition. The biotech industry has claimed that their gene edited products, including seed, plants, microorganism, and animals, are to be considered the same as their conventional counterparts. This deregulation of old and new GMOs absolves the biotech industry from any responsibility and is a continued attack on food sovereignty.

Agribusiness companies have not solved any issue for humanity on the pretext of false narratives around GMOs solving problems of food supplies. The true basis of the world's food supply is free seeds, the heritage of humanity that contain the answers to pests, climate challenges and other threats to the world's production of healthy and sufficient food, not GMOs and Bio-Imperialism. GMOs cannot be forced upon communities, violating norms of democracy and freedom.

All over the world, citizens are rising against the unscientific, undemocratic, anti-ecological imposition of GMOs by corporations. The first generation of GMOs has failed, but corporations continue to impose gene-edited organisms, or new GMOs, in centers of diversity. They continue to shift their

narrative towards framing nature and biodiversity as commodities for commercialization and patent monopolies.

### **Imposition of GM corn in Mexico has global ramifications**

In Mexico, which is the center of origin of maize, just as in other centers of biodiversity, there has been a long struggle by society and organized communities against GMO imperialism threatening the subsistence and culture of its peoples. To date, Mexican society has achieved a ban on the planting of GM maize in Mexico through a class action lawsuit filed against the companies like Bayer-Monsanto, Syngenta and Cortiva Agriscience. This ban is still in force, which since 2013 has prevented the planting of genetically manipulated maize in Mexican territories.

Mexican NGOs have bravely continued to resist genetically modified maize to strengthen access to healthy, sustainable and culturally appropriate food for all people; to defend the food sovereignty of peasant and indigenous communities, responsible for developing the 59 breeds and thousands of varieties of maize existing in Mexico, which are also part of the milpa, a holistic, sustainable and biodiverse system that involves other staple foods such as beans, chili peppers, squash, quelites and amaranth.

Recently, the Mexican government issued an executive order that proposes the gradual prohibition of the use of glyphosate and the use of GM maize in food products, such as tortillas, a staple food for Mexicans. GMOs compromise access to healthy, sustainable, culturally appropriate foods free of genetically modified organisms. Faced with this decision, the U.S. government, based on the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement (USMCA), and under the duress, of agribusiness lobby, installed a dispute settlement panel to reject the Mexican government's decision to restrict the use of genetically manipulated (modified) maize in human food and the importation of glyphosate, citing lack of scientific evidence

of their harm. This Dispute Settlement Panel neglects the risks to human health, the environment and biodiversity associated with genetically manipulated maize. In addition, it jeopardizes the food sovereignty of the entire Mexican population, since maize is an indispensable food.

In response to this omission, on March 15th, non-governmental organizations from Mexico presented their Technical Opinions before the Panel, arguments based on reliable scientific evidence, including [new found evidence by Mexico's scientific advisory board CONAHCYT](#), rooted in scientifically rigorous evidence from academic institutions. This evidence points out and warns about the multiple risks that make it pertinent and urgent to stop the presence of genetically manipulated maize in the food of the Mexican population, and as raw material for other industries.

In stark contrast, the [US refused to do new experiments](#) and engage in real science and continued to stick to pseudo-science funded by the same agribusinesses that produce this GM corn and [make the unscientific claim that it is safe to consume](#) this GM corn.

The case of Mexico is a people's attempt to guard their biodiverse cultures, inheritance, food, health and fields. It is a case of a people demanding their sovereignty be respected. It is a statement to the world and to agribusiness that they cannot continue to impose their system that violates and destroys sovereignty at all these levels, and has wave after wave destroyed health, the land and biodiversity.

On March 5, 2024 Mexico published its [formal response to the dispute](#) where its submission presented evidence supporting the implementation of precautionary measures aimed at safeguarding consumers from potential health risks associated with imported GM corn from the U.S. and residues of glyphosate. They noted that the scientific data regarding the safety of GMOs presented by the U.S. was outdated, with a significant portion



originating from industry-sponsored studies lacking peer-reviewed support. They pointed out that the regulatory process in the U.S. lacks sufficient stringency to guarantee the safety of products for consumption by Mexicans. Furthermore, the [Mexican submission highlighted](#) that Genetically modified (GM) corn, designed to eliminate insect pests, has strong potential to pose negative effects on non-target animals with research that has demonstrated that mammals can experience harm to their digestive systems due to a GM trait that targets the guts of pests, leading to unintended consequences.

While the US claimed that Mexico's ban is "unscientific", [IATP Senior Advisor Timothy A. Wise highlighted](#) that Mexico's response "refutes that claim, presenting hundreds of academic studies that show cause for concern about human health and the threat to native corn diversity."

Significantly, The US claim that Mexico's ban is unscientific is completely unjustified as the US never signed onto the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. It has no biosafety regulatory organism to judge the safety of these GM foods. It is based instead on "substantial equivalence" which is [not enough to be considered as a safety assessment in itself](#). This principle doesn't prioritize consumer protection from health risks nor does it provide consumers with comprehensive information regarding the actual level of risks and hazards associated with "novel foods" (in this case GMO foods) compared to traditional ones.

In its formal submission to the trade dispute panel, Canada aligned itself with the arguments presented by the US government, claiming the safety of genetically modified (GM) corn for consumption in Mexico. However, CBAN's ([Canadian Biotechnology Action Network](#))'s response [refuted this stance by asserting that scientific evidence supported Mexico's precautionary measures](#), particularly due to the extensive use of minimally processed corn in the daily diet of the majority of Mexicans.

[Lucy Sharratt of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network \(CBAN\)](#), stated that, “Mexico is a sovereign nation with the right to determine the future of its food supply and its needs to take action to protect native corn from GM contamination.”

Globally, Mexico’s case is important due to the current context of the world. Due to the industrial food system, we are seeing the rise of chronic diseases rooted in metabolic disorders, increasing ecological disasters, lack of water and declining biodiversity. Mexico defending its cultural and food heritage is equivalent to a country taking a stand, backed by scientific evidence and government support, against the continuation of these multiple crises.

Furthermore, the significance of this case is that an unfavorable resolution for Mexico in this Panel, would limit Mexican people’s right to decide which seeds to plant and which types of maize to feed themselves with. This directly jeopardizes the traditional Mexican cuisine which is central to the cultural identity of the communities that practice and transmit it from generation to generation and has been [recognised as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO](#).

This in turn also has the potential to devastatingly affect all other centers of biodiversity and interconnected food cultures around the world who will continue to face such attacks on their sovereignty.

Mexico holds the legacy of being [one of the first constitutions globally](#) to incorporate enforceable social rights, encompassing health and a clean environment (Article 4). Thus, a right to health is [a legally enforceable provision](#) under its national constitution. This along with achieving [universal health coverage \(UHC\) for its 100 million citizens](#) makes Mexico a country that continues to stand up for biodiversity, for health, for the environment.

## **Convergence: Interconnected strength, interconnected resistance**

In the face of this local and global Bio-imperialism, Navdanya International joined together with the campaign Sin Maiz No Hay País, and Via Orgánica, along with the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (SADER) and the Ministry of Culture, along with other Latin American movements to organize events from March 12th to 16th in Mexico City to carve a common strategy against the further imposition of new and old GMOs around the world, sharing experiences, struggles and solidarity in defense of Biodiversity, Food and Seed Freedom, through strengthening the support and solidarity, in cultivating and connecting different organizations, movements and people.

These meetings and convergences helped create a gathering place for solidarity by bringing together representatives from movements from all over Latin America and beyond to demonstrate that this struggle goes beyond individual borders. All over the world the impositions continue to take place, directly violating the sovereignty and rights of people and nature, in favor of corporate agenda.

José Bernardo Magdaleno Velazco (Nino), President of the Peasant Union, Totikes, Chiapas emphasized that “we are not alone in this fight”. Together with activists and organizations such as the Campaña Nacional Sin Maíz No Hay País, Semillas de Vida, Vía Organica, Regeneration International, Bloque Verde, Probioma, Naturaleza De Derechos, and Semillas de Identidad- Colombia, Navdanya International joined the demand for governments around the world to stop genetically manipulated seeds, which threaten the survival of food and agricultural systems based on biological and cultural diversity.

These events carved a convergence of movements, to stand in

defense of our biocultural diversity and food heritage across the world, in resistance to old GMOs and new GMOs.

It is in this coming together of different movements and voices united in their goal of food and seed sovereignty that these events in Mexico led to the emergence of an interconnected strength and resistance. Where the nurturing of solidarity and a reminder of a common resistance despite varied contexts, echoed and re-iterated that together, we are all more than the sum of the parts. Building relationships and connections, across organizations, across movements and beyond countries is necessary for effectively resisting this GMO imperialism. This interconnected strength is what we have to tap into, to continue our struggle in defense of life, diversity and freedom.

### **Significance: Food sovereignty as a driving force for political sovereignty**

The current socio-political context of Mexico's demand of autonomy based on being a center of diversity and cultural heritage is unique because food sovereignty is the driving force behind the political sovereignty of the people. This reiterates that every kind of autonomy is rooted in food and seed.

At the event held on **March 12, 2024** at Mexican Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (SADER), Mexico City called "In Defense of Food Sovereignty", Dr. Vandana Shiva, President of Navdanya International in her keynote lecture on food sovereignty, mentioned that it was so important to celebrate cultures where cultural diversity and biodiversity are not seen as separate. She added that "Food sovereignty is a high level concept, because it implies the sovereignty of beings to manage and organize themselves toward health." The cultivation of biodiversity has to imply sovereignty at all levels. Sovereignty is needed at all levels for organisms to be able to freely develop and evolve, self organize toward health.

Leydy Pech, evocatively added in the same event that “In Maya, we have no word for GMO, we call them instead seeds that have no heart, seeds with no life.” Furthermore, she asked a significant question, potent for everyone around the world: “Our seeds, our knowledge is our inheritance, with this destruction what will we inherit in the future?”

As also highlighted by Jesús Ramírez Cuevas, general coordinator of social communication and spokesperson for the Government of the Mexican Republic, “Mexican sovereignty starts with food sovereignty.” It is food sovereignty and the sovereignty of all interconnected beings to self-organize and grow with health that holds the power of resistance politically, economically and socially.

GMO imperialism is an attack on this sovereignty of all interconnected beings at all levels of self organization. It is an attack on life itself.

As Leydy Pech echoed: “You cannot call what goes against life, development”. Dr. María Elena Álvarez-Buylla Roces, general director of the National Council of humanities, sciences and technologies (CONAHCYT) said that “On a global level the deregulation and imposition of GMOs and toxic food systems is a denial of sovereignty and right to health on multiple levels.” She added that Mexico’s success in asserting its own sovereignty on seeds and food policies would be a beacon for other countries to be able to assert their food sovereignty and seed freedom in turn.

### **Biodiversity at all levels**

A Seminar on Biodiversity Protection titled “Protection and Conservation of Biodiversity in Centers of Origin” was held on **March 15, 2024** at the Mexican Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) Headquarters, Mexico City. This seminar analyzed and discussed strategies to conserve and protect natural resources in countries that are centers of origin and genetic diversity of species, through a dialogues,

work round tables, and discussions for common strategy with key actors of the Mexican government, representatives from Latin America, Asia, the United States, and others in the protection and conservation of biodiversity in Latin America and other regions.

Maestro Iván Rico López, Subsecretary of Environmental Planning and Policy, SEMARNAT highlighted that “Megadiverse countries, the centers of origin of crop varieties, have greater responsibility in protecting the world’s biodiversity. We have learned that our plant genetic heritage is our cultural heritage. Natural and Social aspects go hand in hand, as those who have preserved the genetic diversity are the indigenous peoples.”

Columba López, Director of the Commission for Natural Resources and Rural Development, CORENADR, emphasized the key to this biodiversity being in the hands of the farmers. It is the farmers who are the custodians of these biodiverse foods, cultures, seeds, knowledges. She said that “We work on native seeds in our Seed Houses. We cultivate and replicate seeds through agroecological practices in the field. We develop seeds that adapt in the mountains or near the water, that are climate resilient and we do it through farmers’ participatory breeding.”

Biodiversity at all levels produces health, diversity in our farms, our seed, our foods, our cultures etc. having a biodiverse field in line with local ecosystem and cultural heritage, gives us a diversity of foods, and a diversity of food cultures. This is how we create health first in our fields all the way to our plates and our guts.

Dr. Vandana Shiva, of Navdanya International highlighted that, “Indigenous peoples and communities know that seeds continuously evolve. By turning biodiversity into technology they (corporations) deny the creativity of biodiversity, they go against how nature works. Diversity is a living necessity.”

She further reiterated that, “The colonizing mentality considers living beings as disposable and nature as raw material to be extracted. Mexico is recovering the dignity of natural resources, which are the basis of our health and well-being & the health of the planet.”

Similarly, at the event held on **March 16, 2024** held at Cencalli, Museo de maíz y centro de la cultura alimentaria, Los Pinos, Ciudad de México, in the presence of the Alejandra Frausto Guerrero, from the Ministry of Culture, Victor Sanchez reaffirmed the need to resist the food imperialism that destroys our cultures by defending our biodiversity and strengthening seed freedom. Navdanya International co-organized this event with [Campaña Nacional Sin Maíz No Hay País](#), [Via Organica](#) and [Regeneration International](#). Andre Leu, Director of Regeneration International, discussed the latest evidence of negative health effects caused by exposure to glyphosate: “There’s scientific evidence about the correlations between the introduction of glyphosate and transgenic crops and the increase in diseases such as cancer, obesity, kidney failure and autism.”

Mercedes López Martínez from [Vía Orgánica](#), Mexico, discussed the great importance of protecting small farmers and indigenous communities as the backbone of a thriving food culture. Miguel Ángel Crespo of [Probioma, Bolivia](#) shared how, “The fight to protect biodiversity and genetic resources is also political, legal and scientific.”

It is this interconnection of diversity at all levels, including diversity of organizations and movements reflecting the interconnection and sovereignty of organisms that is needed to resist GMO imperialism from the ground up.

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Also read:

[Vandana Shiva makes an International call to support Mexico in](#)

[the defense of Seed Freedom and Biodiversity](#)

[Events in Mexico: Resisting GMO Imperialism](#)

[Joint Declaration in Defense of our Biodiversity, Seed and Food Freedom – Resisting GMO Imperialism](#)

[Open Letter from Diverse Women for Diversity to World Leaders](#)

[US pressure to impose GM corn in Mexico threatens global genetic heritage of Maize Diversity](#)

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# Regenerative Agroecology: The Necessary Solution to Counter 'Climate Change'

[Regenerative Agroecology: The Necessary Solution to Counter 'Climate Change'](#)



*"The colonizing mentality sees nature as dead matter to be exploited and used. Colonizers do not see self-organisation. They do not see creativity. They just see control and profits while bringing disease and ill health, destroying the land, the soil, and the water.*



*False solutions, such as synthetic foods, involve a further separation from nature. But the separation between us and nature is the root of the problem.*

*We are now at a watershed between perpetuating the mechanistic model or choosing to live in harmony with nature and its regenerative and creative capacities. We need to bring life back into the soil. In the micro-organisms of the soil we find the life we cannot see, which is the basis of our health and the solution to the climate problem.*

*The real solution to the ecological and climate crisis does not lie in creating substitutes for food or expanding the industrial paradigm, but in scaling the initiatives all over the world that are already working on healing our connection with the Earth through care."*



by [Dr. Vandana Shiva](#), [President of Navdanya International](#)  
December 12, 2023

The industrial agriculture paradigm, which sees the world as a machine, and not as a self-organized living system, has created devastation on the planet, while contributing significantly to the issue of climate change. Navdanya International's latest graphic report, '[Regeneration is Life](#)', presented at Cop 28 in Dubai, analyzes the actual causes at the root of climate change and highlights the true regenerative solutions against the false solutions proposed by polluters.

As pointed out in the report, the ecologically destructive practices of [industrial agriculture account for 29% of all](#)

[greenhouse gas emissions](#) (GHG), making the global food system one of the main culprits behind climate change and environmental degradation.

The fertilizer industry is responsible for [more than a fifth](#) of total estimated greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture systems worldwide. Factory farms are significant contributors to soil and water pollution. The FAO considers that livestock in [CAFOs accounts for 14.5%](#) of global greenhouse gas emissions, while some estimates put the figure [above 30%](#).

Today, the majority of the industrialized and globalized food system is concentrated in the hands of a few companies. Five agrochemical companies [hold a 55% monopoly](#) over the \$61.5 USD billion world seed market. In 2018, [61% of global seeds and pesticide production](#) was owned by three mega-corporations. [Four corporations](#) hold a monopoly over global commodity food trade, and approximately 80% of the US beef market is controlled by only four firms. In 2018, [seven firms](#) dominated poultry, pigs, cattle, and aquaculture genetics, and made over \$80 billion in sales.

But these very corporations are behind the push for [synthetic and lab-made foods](#), with meat industry giants like Tyson foods, JBS, Cargill, Nestlé, and Maple Leaf Foods have invested up to \$2.78 billion, in this new sector. Synthetic and lab-cultured foods are quickly becoming a next means to consolidate even more power and profit into the hands of a few food giants without holding them accountable to the consequences of the system they perpetuate.

The dominant corporate-sponsored narratives are now pushing for the reduction of complex ecological collapse, and climate change, into dualistic narratives around [plant versus animal](#), instead of addressing the larger crisis of how current industrial practices are destroying the Earth's ecosystems.

Acting as if the world were a machine undermines and ultimately destroys life processes and organic systems. In the European Union, for example, total numbers of all types of farmers fell from 14.4 million to 9.1 million between 2005 to 2020. Meaning that [over 5 million](#) small and medium-sized companies have had to shut down. Meanwhile, global biodiversity has decreased by an [average of 69% since 1970](#).

The colonizing mentality sees nature as dead matter to be exploited and used. Colonizers [do not see self-organisation](#). They do not see creativity. They just see control and profits while bringing disease and ill health, destroying the land, the soil, and the water.

False solutions, such as synthetic foods, involve a further separation from nature. But the separation between us and nature is the root of the problem.

We are now at a watershed between perpetuating the mechanistic model or [choosing to live in harmony with nature](#) and its regenerative and creative capacities. We need to bring life back into the soil. In the micro-organisms of the soil we find the life we cannot see, which is the basis of our health and the solution to the climate problem.

The real solution to the ecological and climate crisis does not lie in creating substitutes for food or expanding the industrial paradigm, but in scaling the initiatives all over the world that are already working on healing our connection with the Earth [through care](#).

These solutions already exist and [are being implemented](#) by local, diverse food communities around the world. Showing us that it is possible to walk a path of living in harmony with nature. We are part of the Earth's systems, [our food is a continuum of health](#) from the ecosystems of the earth. We are deeply and inherently interconnected.

Agroecological systems can improve soil health, reduce erosion

and increase resilience against the impacts of climate change through [biodiversity](#) conservation.

Agroecology and organic farming also reduce the need for external inputs through integration of agroecosystem, increase crop diversification and soil management. By increasing carbon sequestration, organic agriculture has a lower climate impact than industrial agriculture. Regenerative agroecology, if systemised, has the regenerative potential [to reverse the course](#) and serve as an important tool for climate change mitigation.

There are two ways of seeing ourselves and our relationship with the Earth. Either we think of ourselves as separate from Nature or as one with it. It only takes putting a seed in the ground to create this vision. And every additional community that lives ecologically, lives a better life. It is a very exciting time to be alive to regenerate life.

[Connect with Navdanya International](#)

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**Vandana Shiva: Bill Gates and Silicon Valley Behind Push for ‘Farming Without Farmers, Food Without Farms’**

## [Vandana Shiva: Bill Gates and Silicon Valley Behind Push for 'Farming Without Farmers, Food Without Farms'](#)

*On the latest episode of Russell Brand's "Stay Free," scholar, environmental activist and food sovereignty advocate Vandana Shiva, Ph.D., discussed food fascism, the power of "philanthropy," digital enslavement and how people can free themselves from this system.*

by [Brenda Baletti](#), Ph.D. , [The Defender](#)

August 2, 2023

"Human beings cannot have a relationship with nature, land and one another, it seems increasingly, without the intercedence of this corporate power," comedian and political commentator Russell Brand told scholar and environmental activist [Vandana Shiva, Ph.D.](#), on the latest episode of his "[Stay Free](#)" podcast.

Brand asked Shiva, a food sovereignty and environmental activist, to explain how this corporate takeover of nature happened.

Shiva said the privatization of land and resources under colonialism was the first step in transforming nature into "either a mine or a dump."

Today, she said, privatization has become so entrenched that mega-corporation [Cargill](#) can own every chicken, chicken production facility, and every input needed to raise chickens, and then dump all of its waste into public rivers.

The situation we face today could not have happened, she said, without the criminalization of farmers – for which she held media organizations like [The Guardian](#) responsible because they attack farmers instead of the corporations.

“If the drivers are the corporations,” she said, “you have to have the guts to bite the corporations. You don’t target the victims. The farmers are victims of this system.”

## **Who are the real ‘food fascists’?**

Brand asked Shiva why the global uprising of farmers – from Sri Lanka and India to Germany, England and [the Netherlands](#) – against the globalization of agriculture had come to be cast as a right-wing idea by the press.

Shiva said Mussolini himself defined fascism as “the convergence of economic and political power.” “Food fascism,” she said, “is the recent control over our food systems by giant corporations and the billionaires.”

Under colonialism, the British controlled the land, she said, but they didn’t control the food. The advent of agricultural industrialization, the green revolution and globalization made it possible for corporations to take [control of food](#).

The call for “[food sovereignty](#),” she said, “came as the call as opposite to the food dictatorship and food fascism.”

Now, she said, those people want to complete the separation of people from the land that began with colonialism.

Today, they want “farming without farmers.”

Being able to plant a seed, input love, knowledge and sun and produce food, “is the only truly independent production system and it’s that freedom they want to attack,” Shiva said, because they are threatened by it.

So they discredit farmers by calling them “fascists” and “right wing.”

“And anybody who facilitates that is essentially doing the work of these globalists,” she said, “they’re the fascists.”

## How 'philanthropy' buys control

Today, people who talk about the disproportionate power and influence that billionaires like [Bill Gates](#) have over global agriculture and health are regarded as "conspiracy theorists," Brand said.

He asked Shiva to explain Gates' rise to power in plain language and with facts.

Shiva said people like Gates became wealthy through neoliberal trade liberalization, where trade in information, in the software and other forms of data Gates produced, went completely untaxed.

Then, she said, they used that money "philanthropically" to gain control of other sectors.

By donating massive sums of money to the [global seed bank](#), to the [World Health Organization](#) and to [media organizations](#) such as The Guardian and the BBC, Gates and other billionaires took control of those institutions.

It even gives them the power to control governments, she said, who have been made desperate for money through indebtedness.

Gates and Silicon Valley, she said, "are very big players in the [fake food future](#) of farming without farmers, food without farms." And they get journalists such as The Guardian's [George Monbiot](#) to promote it.

## Chasing enslavement

Shiva said this vision is built on "an imagined promise of an imagined future that we are never gonna arrive at. Because when you get there, you'll find it doesn't belong to you. It belongs to them."

The systems that support their vision of the future appear to offer us convenience, but in reality, she said, maintaining them takes all of our time.

Many indigenous people, she said, still have a lot of time to enjoy life “because they’re not chasing enslavement through consumption.”

Shiva wondered why people would want a “smart home,” where, for example, “the fridge will tell you your milk is getting old. How dumb are we getting that we can’t open the door of our fridge and know our milk is getting old?”

“All that is surveillance data,” she said.

And processing that data takes big servers. “The tiny bits of enslavement we are getting into is [producing] 4% of greenhouse gases, which is more than the aviation sector,” she said.

She added:

“So, not only is it a very foolish kind of slavery, it’s a huge ecological footprint on the planet. Yes. And we can’t afford it. So we have to learn to walk lightly.”

### **Data is the new oil**

Brand said he was alarmed at the increasing pace of “desacralization” where people prioritize materialism over spirituality and lose control over their lives. He asked Shiva how she thought censorship, the [inhibition of free speech](#) and the ability of the media to shut down dialogue, fed into this process.

Shiva said it was part of “a system of total control,” that makes that control highly profitable.

What’s new in this system according to Shoshana Zuboff’s “[The Age of Surveillance Capitalism](#)” is that today, human beings themselves have been turned into raw material whose data can be extracted.

“That is the capital of today. Big data is the new oil, and



then it's used to manipulate us," she said, adding "Any system that allows you the awareness of your real freedom must be censored."

The strange thing, Brand said, is that this system of technological domination was sold to people as a way of empowering them and giving them their freedom.

[Technology](#) should be a tool, she said, but it "has been elevated to a god" and those opposed to that transformation are discounted, through Orwellian doublespeak, as "right wing."

But, Shiva said, the last few years have shown there are three things people cannot give up:

"First, your ability to know and distinguish between truth and untruth. ... And not allow post-truth to be projected as truth and the truth speakers to be projected as conspirators.

"The second is our ability to relate to each other without the intervention of a surveillance state and surveillance corporation.

"And third, because food is what makes us, it becomes our blood, ourselves, our brain."

In other words, Brand said:

"Speak freely. Tell the truth. Communicate freely. Grow your own food. Don't eat things grown in labs. Don't [eat bugs](#). And don't listen to people who want to promote it."

**Watch here:**

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