



July 26, 2023

Qu Dongyu  
Director General  
UN Food and Agriculture Organization  
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla  
00153 Rome, Italy

Dear Director-General Qu Dongyu,

As you begin your second term as the Director-General of the FAO, we, representatives of civil society, Indigenous Peoples and trade union organizations, would like to seek clarity on the official status of the indefinite Letter of Intent (LOI) signed between FAO and CropLife International (CLI) in October 2020. During your previous term, more than 430 civil society and Indigenous Peoples organizations, 250 scientists and academics, nearly 50 philanthropic groups, nearly 200,000 individuals from over 107 countries, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food have asked the FAO leadership to end this partnership agreement that promotes deeper ties between the agency and the pesticide industry.

We would like to reiterate that the agreement with CLI continues to threaten the FAO's integrity, credibility, impartiality, and independence. As we have elaborated in previous appeals, it did not undergo the FAO's new due diligence framework for private sector partnerships and should be rescinded immediately. This demand to formally end the agreement with CLI gains urgency in light of information that the FAO made shipments of pesticides to several countries from 2020 to 2022. The information, revealed in an [investigative report](#) broadcast in Germany, is highly concerning. Some pesticides included in the FAO shipments, such as paraquat and chlorpyrifos, are [considered highly hazardous](#) and are already banned in numerous countries. There is no known antidote to paraquat, which has been [recommended by the Chemical Review Committee](#) to be listed under the Rotterdam Convention as a severely hazardous pesticide formulation. Chlorpyrifos, which can cause brain damage to children even in low amounts, has been banned in the EU in 2020 and is [being considered for a global ban](#) under the Stockholm Convention. We ask the FAO to review and discontinue shipments of all pesticides. We also ask the FAO to disclose information about all of its pesticide shipments in a regular and transparent manner.

Your new term as Director-General is a fresh opportunity for the FAO to show that the pesticide industry does not hold sway over its policies and decisions. All of the FAO's dealings with the pesticide industry must be subject to greater transparency and accountability—this includes the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, a forum that facilitates private sector investments to Member States which you explicitly invited the CLI to participate in [on the day the LOI was signed](#).

It is also a timely occasion for decisive action on progressively banning Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs), as [recommended](#) by the FAO Council as early as 2006. We ask the FAO to support the global phase-out of HHPs at the upcoming Fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management in September 2023. To remain relevant, a new policy framework under the Strategic Approach on International Chemical Management (SAICM) must set an ambitious target to phase-out HHPs and establish a clear, effective, and multistakeholder mechanism to achieve this.

Many HHPs have been phased-out in several countries [without affecting agricultural productivity](#). Agroecological alternatives exist for many HHPs, including paraquat and chlorpyrifos. With adequate investment in scaling-up ecological alternatives—in which the FAO already plays a key role—it is possible to phase-out the relatively small share of pesticides that cause the most severe harm to human health and the environment.

We cannot afford for the FAO to merely propose to eliminate or phase-out 'risk' from HHPs, rather than eliminating their use. The perpetuation of the risk assessment and mitigation management model that the pesticide industry has promoted for decades is a perpetuation of the use of HHPs and their unacceptable harms. We need the FAO to promote a level of ambition of action on HHPs commensurate with the will of many SAICM stakeholders, and the imperative to urgently address the escalating biodiversity, climate, human health, and human rights crises.

We trust that your commitment to engage meaningfully with civil society, Indigenous Peoples and trade unions as rights holders will result in actions that affirm the FAO as a positive force in ensuring a just agricultural transition for the planet, people and our future generations.

Sincerely,

Maimouna Diene, Chair  
Pesticide Action Network International

Million Belay, Coordinator  
Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)

David Azoulay, Environmental Health Program Director  
Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)

Sofía Monsalve, Secretary General  
FIAN International

Kirtana Chandrasekaran and Martín Drago, Food Sovereignty Program Coordinators  
Friends of the Earth International

Sophia Murphy, Executive Director  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)

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International Indian Treaty Council (IITC)

Pam Miller and Tadesse Amera, Co-Chairs  
International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN)

Sue Longley, General Secretary  
International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied  
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Laurent Gaberell and Carla Hoinkes, Agriculture and Food Experts  
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