

Crisis-Ridden Imperialism, its Financial Institutions Agri-Food-Chemical Corporations Talk Big about “Global Food Insecurity” and “Feeding People of the World” to Profit and Come out of Crisis!

Again the world capitalism is steeped in deep crisis with accelerating uncontrolled inflation and stagflation. To come out of this crises capitalism is requires constant growth, expanding markets and sufficient demand. To facilitate this -international, imperialist capital has been laying the political and legislative ground work.

Taking the occasion of Ukraine-Russia conflict, representatives of international finance capital and its agents have been time and again talking about, “global state of agriculture and food insecurity” and the necessity of ‘raising global food production’ etc. They are falsely impressing the world that due to the Ukraine-Russia war the global food insecurity has considerably increased the imperialist western agri-business corporations are touting that they would increase the agricultural productivity and address global hunger. Even the biggest asset management firms like Black Rock have been promoting the idea of “feeding the world” and “amazing technology” essential to feed the world etc. Bill Gates too, through the op-ed pages of “The New York Times”, commented on the state of global agriculture and food insecurity, misdiagnosing the problem of feeding all the earth’s inhabitants and prescribing certain remedies of his own to resolve the so-called problem raised by him. All these exhortations about food insecurity, need for increasing food production etc. are nothing but, a ploy to seek legitimacy for the imperialist modern agri-tech/agribusiness corporations to sell their products as being “essential to feed the world” and enable them to earn super-profits, by expanding and create sufficient demand.

Besides the present economic crisis that has encompassed the world capitalism, the Ukraine-Russia war too has inconvenienced international finance capital and has been causing considerable harm to the interests of western agribusiness. Western agri-business had been coveting Ukraine’s agriculture sector for quite some time. Since mid-90s foreign control of Ukrainian agriculture is being encouraged by the US-Ukraine business council. Ukraine contains one third of all arable land in Europe. In Nov 2013 the Ukrainian Agrarian Confederation drafted a legal amendment that would benefit global agribusiness produces by allowing the wide-spread use of genetically modified seeds. Even before the conflict the World Bank incorporated measures relating to the sale of agricultural land as conditions in a \$ 350 million development policy loan (COVID ‘relief package’) to Ukraine. This included a required ‘prior action’ to enable the sale of agricultural land and the use of land as collateral.

All these measures and conditions facilitated western agribusiness to entrench into agricultural sector and conduct thriving business earning super-profits. But the Ukraine-Russia conflict had hindered the business of these imperialist agribusiness and agri-biotech giant corporations and global agri-food firms considerably, impairing their interests.

However these imperialist agri-business corporations and financial investment firms intend to profit from destruction as well as from so-called reconstruction. That is why they have taken up the lofty slogans of “feeding the world” and “protection of food security” and “raising food production to the need of feeding the global population” and harping them incessantly.

Let us have a glimpse at how these imperialist finance investment institutions, agribusiness and agri-biotech corporations and foundations in the guise of charitable organisations are operating practically :

According to various studies it is revealed that the institutional investors including hedge funds, private equity and pensions funds are capitalizing on global farm land as a new and highly desirable asset class. Funds tend to invest for a 10-15 year period resulting in good returns for investors but often cause long-term social and environmental devastation. They undermine local and regional food security through buying upland and entrenching in industrial, export-oriented model of agriculture. Private equity funds-pools of money that use pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, endowment funds and investments from governments, banks, insurance companies and high net-worth individuals are being injected into agriculture sector throughout the world. This money is being used to lease or buy up farms on the cheap, and aggregate them into large-scale US style grain and soya bean concerns.

Black Rock : This is the world’s biggest asset management firm that profits and promote from the economic system. They hugely invest in agriculture and water. This is a publicly owned investment manager that primarily provides its services to institutional, intermediary and individual investors.

Black Rock currently has \$ trillion in assets under its management, wielding great influence and clout. On one hand Black Rock had invested \$ 813.5 billion in arms manufacturing companies. On the other hand Black Rock’s global agricultural has been targeting companies (to invest in) involved with agriculture-related chemical products, equipment and infrastructure as well as soft commodities and food, bio-fuels, forestry, agricultural sciences and arable land.

Black Rock’s global consumer staples exchange funds holds shares in a number of world’s largest food companies with agri-food stocks making up around 75% of the fund. Giant agri-food firms that make up the fund include Nestle, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Walmart, Anheuser-Busch InBev, Mondelez, Danone and Kraft Heinz.

Black Rock has indirectly profited from human rights and environmental abuses through investing in banks notorious for financing harmful palm oil firms.

Black Rock's I shares core S&P 500 index ETF has \$ 150 billion in assets under its management. Black Rock holds significant shares in most of the top publicly traded food and agriculture firms which are part of the S&P 500 index.

Black Rock's COW global agriculture ETF has \$ 231 million in assets and focuses on firms that provide inputs like seeds, chemicals and fertilizers and farms equipment and agricultural trading companies.

Collectively the asset management giants—Black Rock, Vanguard, State Street, Fidelity and Capital group – own significant proportions of the firms that dominate at various points along with agri-food supply chains.

Black Rock heavily invested in the success of prevailing globalised system of food and agriculture.

Black Rock sees the healthcare sector as a long-term bet. Poor health is a good business to it. Increased consumption of Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs) was associated with more than 10% of premature, preventable deaths in Brazil according to the American journal of preventive medicine.

This finding is significant not only for Brazil but more so for high income countries such as US, Canada, UK, Australia where UPFs accounts for more than half of total calorific intake.

Due to corporate influence over trade deals governments and the WTO, transnational food retail and food processing companies continue to colonise markets around the world and push UPFs. In Mexico global agri-food companies have taken over food distribution channels, replacing local foods with cheap processed items. In Europe more than half the population of the European Union is overweight or obese, with the poor especially reliant on high-calorie poor nutrient quality food items. That is why Black Rock intends to invest heavily in health care sector and big pharma and profit by it.

By investing heavily in agri-food sector alone Black Rock earned super-profits, at the same time being responsible for the displacement of indigenous systems of agricultural production, impoverishment of many farmers worldwide, destruction of rural communities and culture, poor quality food and illness, less diverse diets, ecological destruction and the proletarianization of independent producers.

Black Rock and its counterpart Vanguard exert control over governments and important institutions like the European Central Bank (ECB) and the US Federal Reserve.

Larry Fink of Black Rock sits on the board of World Economic Forum and the powerful and highly influential council for foreign relation – often referred to as the shadow government of the US.

Since 1998 Black Rock has put itself in a position to defects control the Federal Reserve, most Wall-Street Mega-banks including Goldman Sachs, the Davos World Economic Forum Great Reset and now the Joe Biden administration. The former top people at Black Rock are now in key government positions running economic policy of Biden administration.

That is why Black Rock is steering the 'Great Reset' and the global 'green' agenda, singing the praises of the future food and 'coded' seeds that would produce their own fertilizer with inflated false promises, with the need to keep expanding into or creating new markets to ensure accumulation of capital to offset the tendency for the general rate of profit to fall, and to be able to accumulate capital to be able to reinvest it and make further profits.

Bill Gates and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation :

One of the world's richest men who has been reputed to be a man of great charity too has commented on the global state of agriculture and food security in a recent "The New York Times" op-ed and also in an article of Associated Press. Though while admitting that the world currently produces enough food to adequately feed all the earth's inhabitants, yet he continued to fundamentally misdiagnose the problem as relating to low productivity. Today there is no necessity to increase the production. But there is the immanent necessity of the assurance of more equitable access to food to one and all inhabitants of the world.

Bill and Melinda Foundation created by Bill Gates is not a charitable foundation. In the name of Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) it has been funding and creating institutions that have disproportionately focused on maize and rice rather than locally-adopted and nutritious cereals like sorghum. The AGRA initiative has also pushed restrictive seed legislation that limits and restricts crop innovation to well resourced labs and companies. It contributed to the privatisation and consolidation of monopolies over seed development and markets. In reality Bill Gates Foundation is part of creating the very problem of hunger.

But Bill Gates prescribes four remedies for increased food (crop) production for the so-called protection of global food security. They are : 1) the supposed need for 'credit for fertilizer', cheap fertilizer to ensure agricultural productivity. 2) The idea of green revolution of mid-20th century needs to be replicated now to address hunger 3) the idea of 'better' seeds, often produced by large corporations 4) developing meaningful (fundable) solutions.

All the above prescriptions are intended to profit from agri-food business, agri-business and agri-biotech business by the giant corporations, invested by imperialist financial organisations and fund management institutions, besides the imperialist agri-business global corporations.

Synthetic fertilizers contribute to overall green house gas emissions and are the primary source of nitride oxide emissions. Producing nitrogen fertilizers requires 3-5% of the world's possible gas. They also make farmers and importing nations dependent on volatile prices on international markets and are a major cause of rising food-prices globally. Toxic and

damaging synthetic fertilizers are not a feasible way forward. Yet Bill Gates prescribes such a remedy that needed to increase agricultural productivity and address hunger!

In 1970 itself in his famous court statement Com. T. Nagi Reddy had amply exposed the predatory nature of green revolution imposed by imperialist USA on India and other developing countries and warned against its perils. It did very little to reduce the number of hungry people in the world or to ensure equitable and sufficient access to food. It created many other problems from ecological issues like long-term soil degradation to socio-economic ones like increased inequality and indebtedness (which has been a major contributor to the epidemic of farmer suicides in our country). The 'green revolution' entrenched seed and agri-chemical giants in global agriculture and ensured farmers become dependent on their proprietary and global chains. Still Bill Gates prescribes to replicate 'green revolution'!

The climate-resilient seeds are already in existence and being developed by farmers and traded through informal seed markets. But instead of encouraging these practices and developments Bill Gates prescribes the idea of so-called 'better seeds' to promote giant GM seed corporations and their loot in the global seed business in the name of 'better seeds' and 'technology'!

There are many tangible, ongoing proposals and projects that work to boost productivity and food-security from bio-fertilizer and bio-pesticide manufacturing facilities, to agro-ecological farmer training programmes, to experimentation with new soil – management and water techniques, low-input farming systems and pest-detering plant species. But Bill Gates instead of encouraging these endeavours, has chosen to ridicule these efforts and is presenting his preferred high-tech solutions including genetic engineering, new breeding technologies and digital agriculture which have in fact failed to reduce hunger or increase food access as promised.

Agri-Biotech Sector and Agri-Firms and their Monopoly :

Today we are witnessing rising food prices. Besides the financial funds, investment banks, the food crisis is engineered by global grain trade conglomerates like Cargil, Lowis Dreyfus, ADM and Bunge and they are profiteering.

Agri firms like Bayer, Syngenta (Chem China) and Corteva are regarding the present circumstances as an opportunity to promote their agenda and seek commercialization of unregulated and improperly tested Genetically Engineered (GE) technologies. With false narratives that their hybrid seeds and their GE seeds along with their agri-chemicals are essential for feeding a growing global population they are promoting their business. This agenda is being orchestrated by vested interests and career scientists, lobby groups and displaced politicians and journalists. Scientists like professor Michal Hudson of Cornell Alliance for science funded by Gates Foundation are advocating for GE seeds and chemicals with baseless and absurd claims. They are refusing to acknowledge that genuine food security and food sovereignty can be achieved without proprietary products.

The reality of food insecurity is being twisted to serve the agenda of imperialist agri-biotech sector industry. The regulatory bodies and institutions supposedly set-up to serve the public interest are being placed under intense pressure or subverted.

Big biotech corporations like Bayer and Corteva which together already control 40% of the global commercial seed market are now trying to cement dominance. These companies are seeking to increase their control over future of food and farming by extensively patenting plants and developing a new generation of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). They are moving to patent plant genetic information that can occur naturally. They claim all plants with those genetic traits as their "invention". Such patents on plants would restrict farmer's access to seeds and impede breeders from developing new plants as both would have to ask for consent and pay fees to biotech companies.

Corteva has applied for 1,430 patents on new GMOs while Bayer has applications for 119 patents. These patents would also cover plants which naturally present the same characteristics as the GMOs they engineered. Thus they profit from farmers and plant breeders. For e.g. Corteva holds a patent for a process modifying the genome of a cell using the CRISPER technique and claims the intellectual property to any cells, seeds and plants that include the same genetic information whether in broccoli, maize, soy, rice, wheat, cotton, barley or sunflower.

In India with the collusion of the government with global agribusiness, GM mustard is allowed and permitted for commercial cultivation with the approval by the GEAC the regulatory body despite many objections that the potential approval is unsafe, unneeded and unwanted.

Until mid-1990s though India was virtually self-sufficient in edible oils, the then import tariffs were reduced leading to an influx of cheap (subsidized) edible oil imports that domestic farmers could not compete with. This effectively devastated home-grown edible oils sector and served the interests of palm oil growers and US grain and agriculture commodity company Cargill. Now with the argument that GM mustard would increase productivity and this would help reduce imports of edible oils, the GM mustard commercial cultivation is approved, to facilitate gaining control on our oil sector by the imperialist agri-biotech and agribusiness giant corporations.

The three farm laws enacted by the government provided huge investment opportunities for financial (international) capital in India. These laws represented a capitulation to the needs of imperialist foreign agri-business and asset managers who require access to India's farm land. These laws invited large-scale speculative hoarding of food. This sparked the rise of agribusiness corporations, threatening India's traditional variety of trading networks, food markets and small farmers.

Large corporate houses diverted their activities into procuring, transporting, storing, processing and distributing food. Major Indian industrial conglomerates, since mid 2000s

have entered the fresh food supply chain : Reliance Fresh, Adani Agri Fresh, Bharati's Field Fresh etc.

Adani Agri Logistics built and operated grain silos for the central government's FCI. Nearly 900 Adani – controlled silos are set up all over India to facilitate grain storage and interstate as well as international food trade.

Imperialist giant business corporations like Amazon and Walmart have entered into food trade in India, alluring the consumers in umpteen ways.

PepsiCo has already established its control on Potato crop in India and its processing into a variety of food items.

Now the high-tech agri-business corporations are aiming to digitize all agricultural activities to create a business in big-data.

With digitalization automation can be facilitated through the introduction of drones, sensors and robots which would displace human labour. The food sovereignty of small and family members in India could be wiped out by such larger and high-tech firms. The agri-food chains are consolidating their monopoly power. There is a growing evidence that domestic agri-business such as Adani and Ambani are collaborating with international imperialist agri-business entities like Cargill.

The enormous power of such large corporations increases income vulnerability for small farmers and food insecurity for rural and urban consumers.

With the tragic experience of BT cotton farmers in Maharashtra and AP it has been amply proved that due to use of BT cotton seeds, farmers are burdened with more pests, more pesticides, higher cost of seeds and pesticides and in longer-term, it brought collapse of several small farmers who cannot bear the higher-risks and losses, become indebted and may even lose their land, while some of the richest persons are able to benefit as agents of seeds and pesticides, as money lenders and land-grabbers.

The same fate will occur with the so-called new 'amazing technology', and globalised food system that is being touted as a panacea for global food security and feeding the world. Farmers will be forced out of farming or trapped on proprietary product tread-mills working for corporate supply chains and the public fed GMOs, more ultra-processed products and lab-engineered food.

As stated in an earlier para, this is the glimpse of how imperialist financial institutions, investment organisations, global agribusiness and agri-tech corporations operate in practice to gobble up the entire global agricultural sector and food sector and to grab the entire global farm lands.

Much has to be studied into the thousand and one aspects of the methods and machinations of these imperialist organisations and corporations to plunder the globe in the name of "food security" and "feeding the inhabitants of the world"!

Such knowledge would enrich the communist revolutionary and anti-imperialist forces in detailing their programmes and conduct activities with much more clarity to overthrow the imperialism – a bane to the very existence of the entire humanity.

(Based on the articles by Colin Todhunter, Soma Marla, Bharat Dogra, Preetam Singh and the open letter to Bill Gates by 50 organisations of Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa)