U.S. Farmers Call Out U.S. Ambassador for Pushing Agribusiness Agenda and Attacking Agroecology at U.N.

by US Food Sovereignty Alliance

The U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA), a network of 50+ grassroots organizations and grassroot supportive organizations, has just published an open letter denouncing the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (U.N.) Agencies for Food and Agriculture, Indiana Agribusinessman Baron Kip Tom, for his unprecedented attacks on Agroecology - a science, practice, and organizing tool for farmers and food producers that bases food production on ecological principles - and on the U.N. itself. In its letter, the USFSA asserted that food producers around the world and in the United States need Agroecology to support their communities, protect the planet, and ensure everyone has access to healthy food.

“Agroecology is Anti-Science” Ambassador Kip Tom asserted in a speech to the U.S. Department of Agriculture in early 2020 and in a recent editorial that Agroecology is “Anti-Science,” and he has made fearmongering comments that “Hunger and Poverty will be much worse if farmers stop using toxic pesticides, genetically modified seeds, other expensive technologies that are controlled by agribusiness.”

“FAO Against American Values” Ambassador Tom also blames the U.S. Department of Agriculture for being “against American values” and used his history growing up on a farm 20,000 acres like Ambassador Tom, or would they want to,” said Jim Goodman, retired dairy farmer from Wisconsin and current President of National Family Farm Coalition.

Jim Goodman added that practitioners of Agroecology embrace science and technology but ensure that they serve farmers, workers, and all food producers by prioritizing greater social equity, the restoration of ecosystems, and more sustainable food systems and trade, and by making research and development processes more participatory, collaborative and community-based. Jim Goodman added that practitioners of Agroecology encompass a science and technology but ensure that they serve farmers, workers, and all food producers by prioritizing greater social equity, the restoration of ecosystems, and more sustainable food systems and trade, and by making research and development processes more participatory, collaborative and community-based.

Agroecological Farming Jennifer Taylor, an organic family farmer and Associate Professor at the Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University, said that: “Agroecological farming systems promote soil fertility, soil and water conservation, biodiversity, healthy environments, mitigate pest damage and climate change. Agroecological practices develop sustainable farming systems that benefit our communities by generating employment, providing essential services, and distributing healthy produce.”

Taylor also noted that organic farmers: “Support the avoidance of synthetic hormones and antibiotics, and we oppose the use of sewage sludge, irradiation, GMO/Genetic Engineering materials and GMO agricultural strategies. Some of our key practices include: growing a healthy farm through gaining knowledge to support what grows best on our farm environment; building healthy soil, selecting integrating mulches, crop rotations, cover crops, compost use, enabling pollinator and beneficial insect habitats; selecting viable locally adapted varieties; seed saving.”

USFSA Supports U.N. Process Finally, the USFSA denounced the long history of the U.S. government disrupting and obstructing democratic policy-making at the United Nations and in other countries and selling out rural and urban communities in favor of transnational corporations. The letter calls on Ambassador Kip Tom to support democratic U.N. processes and to listen to U.S. food producers, not U.S. agribusiness corporations, and support Agroecology.

“Family farmers, food and farm workers, and rural communities need to be at the center of policy-making, especially at the global level,” said Tristan Quinn-Thibodeau, national campaigner with ActionAid USA and part of the USFSA’s International Relations Collective. “U.N. places the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) as the center holders of human rights - the frontline, grassroots communities who are entitled to human rights and so it is critical that governments and all stakeholders prioritize and protect the participation of grass roots organizations, especially from communities that have been historically excluded.”

Corporate Model Conflict The conflict between the Corporate Model of Agriculture - based on profits and Agroecology - based on human rights, the rights of peasants, the protection of nature, and food sovereignty - will determine the kind of world we will leave the next generations,” said Patti Naylor who farms with her husband George in west-central Iowa. “Agroecology is the only choice that can support farmer livelihoods and meet the challenge of climate change, food insecurity and environmental collapse.”