

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 grassroots 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 Agribusiness 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 US Department of Agriculture in early 2020 and in a recent editorial that Agroecology is “Anti-Science,” and he has made fear-mongering 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.

“Ambassador Tom’s disdain for Agroecology reveals that he is indeed has a minimal understanding of the concept of Agroecology,” said Patti Naylor, a farmer from Iowa who represented the USFSA and the North American region at the U.N. Committee on World Food Security (CFS) for when it discussed Agroecology in 2019, where she met Ambassador Tom. “Agroecology is not simply a set of farming prac-



Indiana Agribusinessman Kip Tom, appointed in 2018 by President Trump as Ambassador to the United Nations for Food and Agriculture, is being sworn in by Vice President Pence.

tics but instead comes out of people’s movements, in which social commitments and political education make Agroecology the pathway to Food Sovereignty. All of this is a threat to the power and influence of a global agrifood industry. Ambassador Tom’s role at the U.N. is to defend and expand the dominance of the agrifood industry, but his task is becoming more and more difficult as the Global Health Pandemic has revealed a fragile food supply chain, dependent on the exploitation of people and nature.

“FAO Against American Values” Ambassador Tom also blames a key U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) whose governing committee endorsed Agroecology two years ago, for being “against American values” and used his history growing up on a family farm to posture as if he represents the interests of family farmers. Ambassador Tom now operates agribusiness Tom Farms, which man-

ages 25,000 acres in the U.S. and Latin America and produces seed for companies like Bayer-Monsanto and Syngenta.

Ambassador Tom is not for American Family Farmers Member organizations of the USFSA denounced Ambassador Tom for attempting to speak for American family farmers and food producers, the majority of whom want and demand Agroecology, food sovereignty and the human right to food. Most farmers in the world do not farm 20,000 acres like Ambassador Tom, nor would they want to.” said Jim Goodman, retired dairy farmer from Wisconsin and current President of National Family Farm Coalition. “Farmers want to farm within their means, matching their local context and diets. The Green Revolution, which Ambassador Tom says we need instead of Agro-ecology has played havoc with people’s lives and the environment across the world.” *Continued on pg.15*

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. organic seeds and transplants,

Agroecological Farming

Jennifer Taylor, an organic family farmer and Associate Professor at the Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University, and one of the national coordinators of USFSA, 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 Speaks Out

The USFSA also issued a strong repudiation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s decade-long support



U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance

Works to end poverty, rebuild local food economies, assert democratic control over the food system. Believe all people have the right to healthy, culturally appropriate food produced in an ecologically sound manner

of extractive, “Fencerow-to-Fencerow” agriculture and pro-agribusiness “Get-Big-or-Get-Out” policy framework. These policies have pushed millions of family farmers out of business and have polluted and poisoned rural communities. The USFSA called for systematic changes in the U.S. food and agriculture policy and a Green New Deal that centers on the needs and voices of frontline communities and is based in environmental and climate justice.

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 grassroots 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.”