

Exposing corporate capture of the UNFSS through multistakeholderism

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**FOOD SYSTEMS
4 PEOPLE**

**Liaison Group of the People's
Autonomous Response to the
UN Food Systems Summit**

1. INTRODUCTION

Multistakeholderism and the UN Food Systems Summit

This brief exposes the rising threat of Multistakeholder Initiatives (MSIs) and increasing corporate influence over the governance of food systems via the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). At its core the UNFSS is geared toward moving from multilateralism - involving processes and decision making led by States - to multistakeholderism - a practice of governance that brings multiple stakeholders including corporations, corporate platforms and business associations, donors, academics and civil society actors together to participate in dialogue, decision making, and implementation of responses to jointly perceived problems.¹ The United Nations and its system organizations and programs are meant to be multilateral in nature; however, multilateralism is increasingly being transformed into multistakeholderism. This system allows powerful transnational corporations, their platforms and associations to direct international and national policy making, financing, narratives and governance while promoting corporate friendly, false solutions to food systems in crisis.

Given the multiple systemic crises (climate change, COVID-19, biodiversity loss, hunger, inequality) that the global, industrial food system is contributing to, and local/national food systems are being affected by, holistic food systems analyses and transformation are needed, firmly aimed at structural and systems change, and rooted in human rights and food sovereignty. Yet, the UNFSS has been captured by MSI and corporate interests and is very far from this vision. Rather it is going in the opposite direction - with a piecemeal approach to solutions, lack of transparency, lack of rigor of analysis and complete disregard for crucial aspects of food systems transformations such as agency, power, market concentration and systemic inequalities.

MSIs are disproportionately led by for-profit businesses and corporations and are rooted in neoliberalism and capitalism, prioritizing market interests over human rights. This leads to the separation of the right to adequate, nutritional food from structural factors, such as persisting class, racial, and gender inequalities, and subsidies and government policies that support agribusinesses over small-scale food producers and workers. Instead, policies are prioritized that maintain the status quo: the corporate sector's dominance in the global food economy, particularly in terms of production inputs (pesticides, fertilizers, seeds and breeds), trade in agricultural commodities and food processing, and food retailing.² A reshaping of global governance that is rooted in corporate growth, Big Data,³ and technofixes will only serve to further widen global economic inequality and further threaten food and land sovereignty for rural, peasant, and indigenous peoples.

In this brief we investigate some of the networks of MSIs influencing the UNFSS and how they are driven by corporate sector interests.

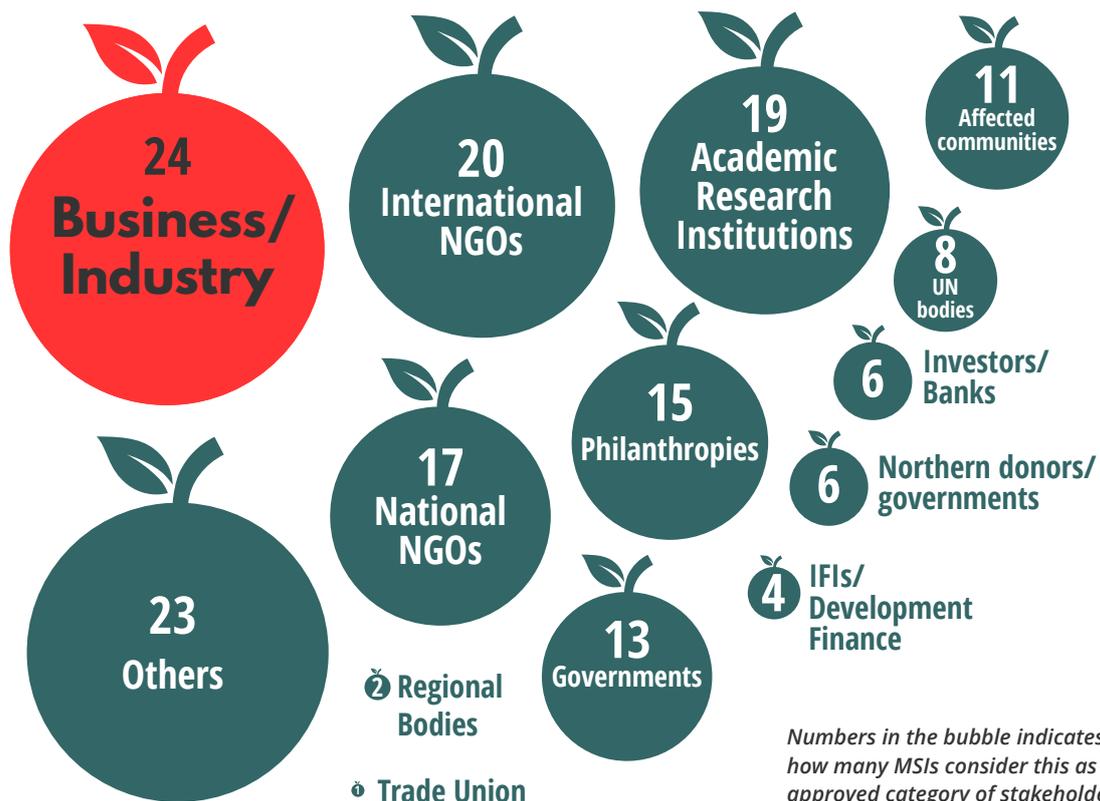
Private sector actors are the most influential in Multistakeholder Initiatives

An examination of 26 MSIs in food and agriculture⁴ indicates the strong influence of corporations at the cost of public interest. In these MSIs, the corporate private sector – businesses, companies, and industry players along the global supply value chain – have played leadership roles, particularly acting as chairs and vice chairs of their decision-making bodies and governing institutions, or initiating and convening MSIs. In this comparison of 26 agriculture related MSIs, the most influential stakeholders were the business/industry sector, followed by individuals & institutions (consulting firms, experts in the field, other MSIs), academic and research institutions. The agriculture, land, nutrition and food-related United Nations bodies such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Food Programme (WFP) only come fourth; and corporate philanthropies such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Master Card Foundation, and Syngenta Foundation place fifth.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) and World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD) lead the pack of influential corporate actors – as chairpersons or members of the governing bodies of five MSIs which are the Eat-Lancet Commission on Sustainable Healthy Food Systems, UN Food Systems Summit, New Vision for Agriculture, Global Council on Food Security, and the Florverde Sustainable Flowers.

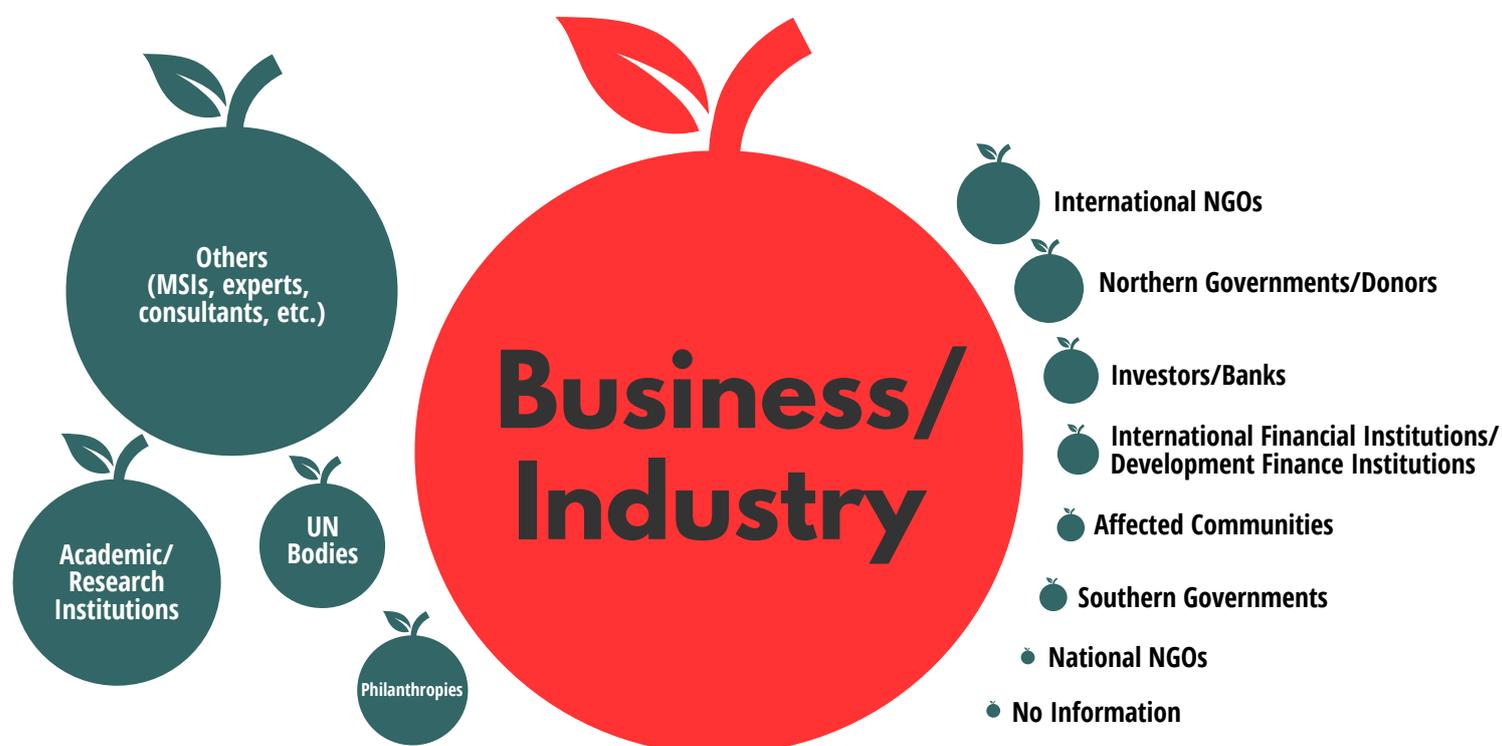
GRAPHIC 1

Who are considered stakeholders in the 26 MSIs?



GRAPHIC 2

Most influential stakeholders in 26 food, agriculture and nutrition multistakeholder initiatives (MSI)



The 26 MSIs analysed

1. Scaling Up Nutrition 'Movement' (SUN)
2. Bonsucro
3. Equitable Food Initiative
4. Florverde Sustainable Flowers* (renamed as such in 2011)
5. Global Coffee Platform (renamed in 2016)
6. Roundtable on Responsible Soy
7. Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
8. UTZ Certified* (merged with the Rainforest Alliance in 2018)
9. Land Portal Foundation
10. Land Matrix Initiative (LMI)
11. International Land Coalition
12. Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI)
13. UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS21)
14. Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture
15. Initiative for Smallholder Finance (ISF)
16. World Cocoa Foundation (WCF)
17. Better Cotton Initiative (BCI)
18. Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP) (succeeded the AgriProFocus and the Food & Business Knowledge Platform)
19. Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
20. Global Shea Alliance (GSA)
21. New Vision for Agriculture (NVA)
22. Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP)
23. International Seafood Sustainability Foundation
24. Global Partnership for Ocean (ceased operations in 2015)
25. EAT-Lancet Commission on Sustainable Healthy Food Systems (*organized into three legal entities: the non-profit EAT Foundation and two limited companies, EAT Stockholm Food Forum AB in Sweden and EAT Stockholm Food Forum AS in Norway)
26. Global Council on Food Security

UNFSS embeds multistakeholderism in food systems governance

The Food Systems Summit has been criticized by over 550 civil society organizations for its corporate, big data, and big finance influence, including the involvement of the World Economic Forum, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and agrochemical & large agriculture corporations, whose “game-changing solutions” will only further false solutions to global inequality, food insecurity, climate change, and biodiversity loss.^{5,6} The Summit is expected to lead to a digital push in food systems led by technology and agribusiness giants, and policies that support corporate agri-tech and the private sector rather than centering those most affected by food insecurity, such as pastoralists, peasants, indigenous peoples, women, youth, workers, fisherfolk, consumers, landless people and peoples affected by food insecurity in cities.^{7,8} The UNFSS is undermining existing multilateral and rights based food governance spaces such as the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS) by introducing multistakeholder governance.⁹

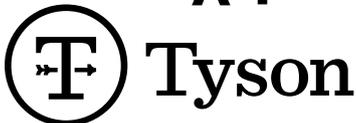
3.1 MSIs in leadership positions in the UNFSS

In June 2019, the WEF signed a strategic agreement with the UN for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This agreement allowed for multistakeholder governance to expand to education, health, food, and climate change sectors.¹⁰ This Memorandum of Understanding was the grounding for the UNFSS, which was announced in October 2019 by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. The Chair of the Summit Advisory Committee is Amina Mohammed, the Deputy Secretary General of the UN and Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group. Mohammed serves on the Board of the Global Development Program of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation amongst other advisory panels and boards.

Agnes Kalibata, President of Alliance for A Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is the UN Special Envoy to the UNFSS. The Summit leadership also is made-up of an Advisory Committee, Scientific Group, UN Task Force and five Action Tracks with their own leadership teams. MSIs are prominent in the UNFSS both in leadership positions as well as the Action Tracks.

Corporate Actors in the UNFSS

BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation



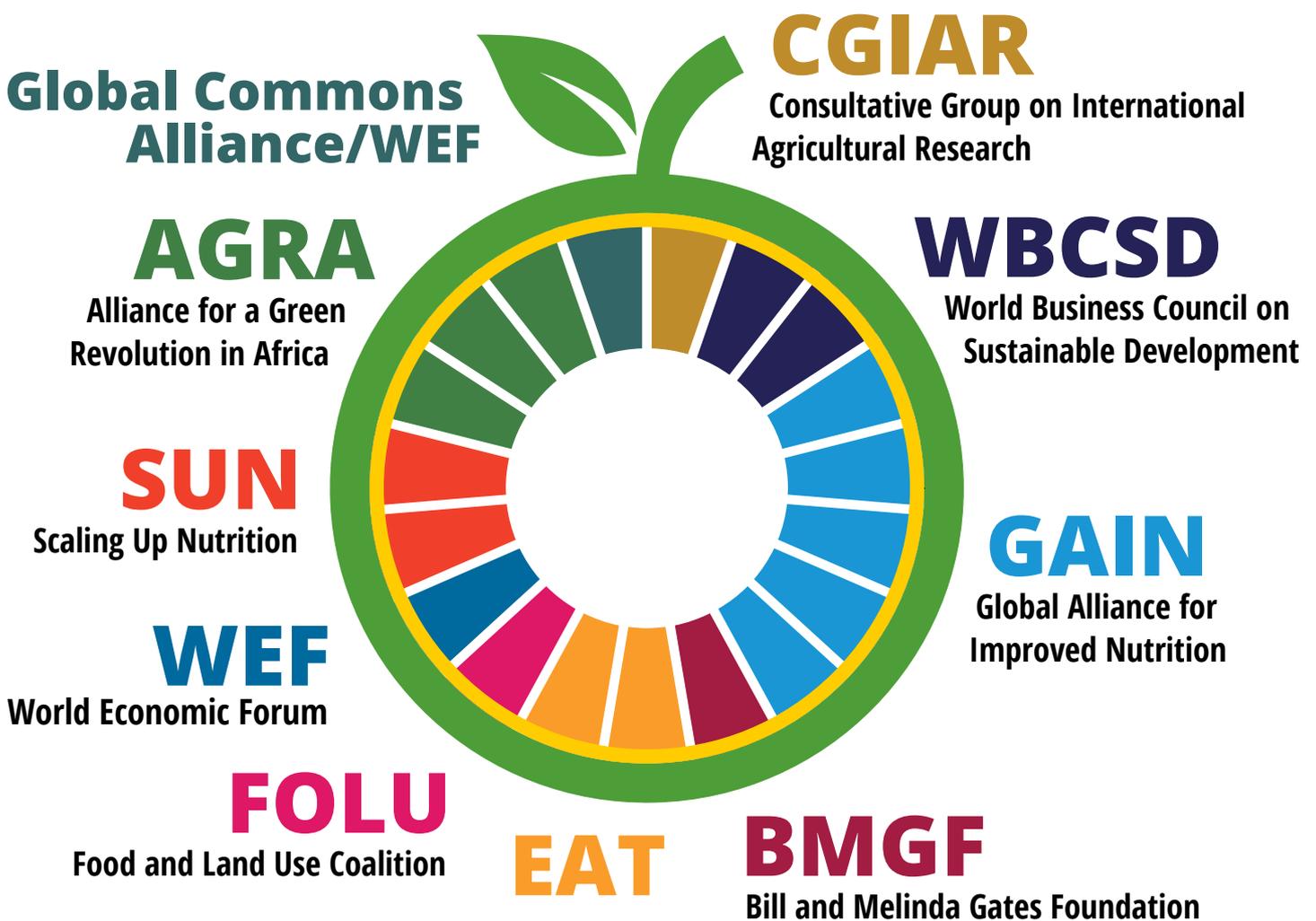
MSIs investigated in the UNFSS:

World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD)	The WBCSD is an international “CEO-led” business coalition of over 200 businesses and partners. The WBCSD is an MSI deeply responsible for the narrative that solving climate change and environmental degradation due to extractivism should be managed by corporations and the elite.
Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)	GAIN is a Swiss based foundation that works on decreasing hunger & malnutrition through mobilizing private investment and businesses. GAIN has clear ties to the private sector, approximately 150 transnational corporations. ¹¹
Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)	The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research is an informal network of 15 international agricultural research centres. It is the most influential agricultural research body in the South, and thus affects food and agricultural development policies for resource-poor farmers worldwide. ¹²
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)	The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) is one of the most influential private foundations globally with an endowment of \$49.8 billion dollars. ¹³ BMGF is hugely influential in food governance funding: 50% of its grants were spread out amongst the CGIAR, AGRA, the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), and international organizations such as the World Bank and UN agencies. ¹⁴ It advocates for techno-fixes and specifically biotechnology based solutions. ¹⁵
EAT	EAT consists of the EAT Forum, EAT Foundation, and the EAT-Lancet Commission on Sustainable Healthy Food Systems. EAT identifies as “a science-based global platform for food system transformation” through “sound science, impatient disruption & novel partnerships.” ¹⁶ Over one-fourth of its funding comes from companies and businesses that are diversifying to plant-based products such as the Nordic Choice Hotels, Aviva, Nofima, BAMA, Nestlé, Fazer, Seafood Innovation Cluster, Food Industry Asia (FIA), Oatly, Bayer, City Finansiering, Deloitte, Google, Novo Nordisk, Umoe, Eurofins. ¹⁷
Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU)	FOLU is a partnership created in 2017 matching private sector interest with countries at the UN General Assembly and co-hosted by EAT. FOLU emerged from the Business & Sustainable Development Commission that was created in the WEF’s 2016 meeting in Davos. ¹⁸
World Economic Forum (WEF)	The World Economic Forum (WEF) located in Davos, Switzerland is a transnational organization of corporate, political, intellectual, and civil society leaders, with 1000 corporate “Foundation Members.” ¹⁹ The WEF is pushing for the Great Food Transformation which forms a part of the nutrition wing of their Great Reset and 4 th Industrial Revolution agenda to unlock \$90 trillion in new investments & infrastructure. ²⁰
Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)	The Scaling-up Nutrition (SUN) initiative is a multistakeholder initiative in the food and nutrition arena. SUN was launched in 2010 through a meeting with the IMF and the World Bank. The SUN Business Network (SBN) is co-run by GAIN and has funding from the BMGF. SUN Business Network has over 400 businesses in their Global and Country Networks, including transnational and national corporations. ²¹
Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)	AGRA is a self identified non-profit founded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation that promotes the spread of industrial agriculture and agribusiness in Africa.
Rockefeller Foundation	The Rockefeller Foundation was founded in 1913 by John D. Rockefeller, the co-founder of Standard Oil and his son. In 2015, it was ranked the 39 th largest US foundation ²² and its endowment is over \$6 billion. ²³ Rockefeller is a powerful philanthropy working to advance science and technology to address global problems in health, food, power and economic mobility.

Below we outline where MSIs and other corporate actors hold leadership roles in the UNFSS and in Action Track 3 on “Boost Nature positive production” also referred to as Nature Based Food in the UNFSS Action areas.

GRAPHIC 4

Corporate influence in the UNFSS leadership



Each slice represents the influence of the corporate actor or MSI in the UNFSS leadership: champions network, scientific group, advisory committee, action tracks, special envoy.

In Action Track 3 – “Boost nature-positive production” for example, there is only one indigenous group present in the mapping of game changing solutions, in contrast with 29 private sector corporations, 26 multistakeholder leadership teams, 9 NGOs, 6 Member countries, 7 research institutes, 6 UN agencies, 5 producers associations and a few other individuals and 2 academic institutions.²⁴

GRAPHIC 5

Corporate influence in UNFSS Action Track 3: boost nature-positive production



Nestlé, nature based food and net zero

Nestlé has made big commitments to support “nature based solutions” (NBS) for food or “nature positive food” which forms Action Track 3 of the UNFSS. Nestlé claims it will achieve net-zero climate emissions from its support for NBS. Yet, rather than decreasing the production of its most emission-intensive products such as industrial meat and dairy, Nestlé is planning on increasing production of dairy, livestock, and commodity products by 68 percent by 2030. It is intending to rely primarily on carbon offset credits to make up for this drastic increase in emissions. Nestlé has pledged to invest US\$1.2 billion in “regenerative agricultural practices,” which includes destructive practices that are questionable in terms of carbon sequestration. This is also a minuscule 1.5 percent of the sum it transferred to shareholders in 2020. One of the programs Nestlé has invested in to improve agriculture practices, 4R Nutrient Stewardship Programme, has led to greater use of fertilizers.²⁵

Investigating some key MSIs within the UNFSS – WBSCD, WEF and AGRA

4.1 World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

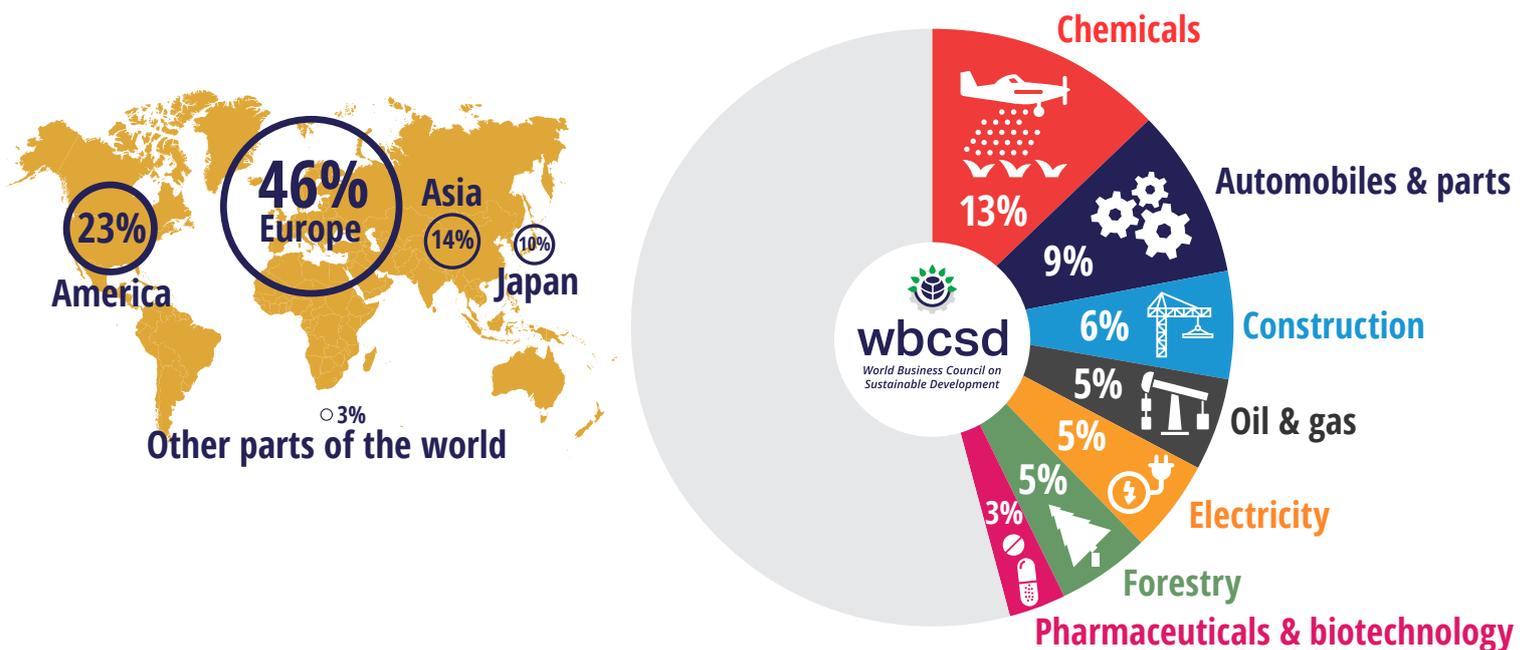
The WBCSD is an international “CEO-led” business coalition of over 200 businesses and partners. The WBCSD is an industry platform. It became the WBCSD in 1995 and has been promoting the narrative of corporate social responsibility and sustainable business since its inception. The WBCSD is an MSI deeply responsible for the narrative that “solving” climate change and environmental degradation due to extractivism can be profitable and should be managed by corporations and the elite.²⁶ The WBCSD is also pushing the popular UNFSS and WEF concept of “game changing solutions.” WBCSD member companies come from all business sectors with a combined revenue of over \$8.5 trillion USD and include 70 national business councils.²⁷

WBCSD’s 200 member companies include 13% in chemicals, 9% in automobiles & parts, 6% in construction, 5% in oil & gas, 5% in electricity, 5% in forestry & paper, and 3% in pharmaceuticals & biotechnology with 46% of these businesses in Europe, 23% in North America, 14% in Asia, 10% in Japan and 3% or less in other parts of the world.²⁸

Included in the members are agrochemical giants BASF, Bayer, Corteva, Syngenta, Sumitomo Chemical, DuPont, Dow, and also BP, Cargill, Chevron, Danone, Google, Kellogg’s, McKinsey & Company, Nestle, Nutrien, Pepsico, P&G, Ptt Global Chemical, Shell, Rabobank, Santander, Unilever, Walmart, and Viterra.²⁹

GRAPHIC 6

Categories of TNCs in WBSCD’s 200 Member Companies



The WBCSD is an international “CEO-led” business coalition of over 200 businesses and partners and is pushing the popular UNFSS and WEF concept of “game changing solutions”.



Shell and offsets using nature based solutions

Shell is a fossil fuel giant and also heavily invested in “nature based solutions” in land and food. Rather than decrease emissions at source, Shell plans to increase its liquefied natural gas (LNG) operations by 20 percent through 2025. Shell is still planning to spend US\$8 billion annually on oil and gas production, and US\$4 billion a year in fossil gas. Shell’s new pathway to 1.5 degrees assumes a continued role for oil, gas and coal until the end of the century. Shell’s plan relies on offsetting 120 million tonnes of CO₂ a year by 2030. The main pathway is the “extensive scale-up of nature-based solutions” – specifically planting trees on an area the size of Brazil.³⁰



Bayer Carbon Initiative

In July 2020, Bayer, which now owns Monsanto and its subsidiary, The Climate Corporation, launched the Bayer Carbon Initiative, which pays farmers who use its digital farming app if they faithfully follow its recommendations (which includes using Bayer products) to sequester carbon in their soils. Satellite imaging is then used to verify the carbon sequestration. Bringing millions of acres of digitally-monitored industrial agriculture monocultures into global carbon markets under the guise of “Nature-based Solutions” would create a huge financial windfall for Bayer and the other digital farming giants.³¹

4.2 World Economic Forum

The World Economic Forum (WEF) located in Davos, Switzerland is a transnational organization of corporate, political, intellectual, and civil society leaders made up of and funded by 1000 corporate “Foundation Members.”³² The WEF is connected to the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR): 28 of their 100 corporate Strategic Partners were corporate members of the CFR in 2010.³³ The WEF is pushing for EAT’s Great Food Transformation which plays into the nutrition wing of their Great Reset³⁴ and 4th Industrial Revolution agenda to unlock \$90 trillion³⁵ in new investments & infrastructure.³⁶

The WEF has been a major player and MSI pushing for further public-private partnerships, a corporatocracy of sorts with corporations governing alongside States, the UN, and powerful NGOs.³⁷ The WEF has connections with many of the organizations, corporations, and MSIs involved in the UNFSS. The WEF is a key driver behind the UNFSS and one of the main bodies motivating this shift to “multistakeholderism” that appears to include the public sector but prioritizes scientists, engineers, research institutions and academics, data companies, chemical companies, politicians etc. to create the appearance of a democratic process.

The WEF’s Global Redesign Initiative, launched in November 2010 contains some of the most comprehensive sets of proposals for reshaping global governance since the formation of the United Nations in 1945.³⁸

4.3 Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)

AGRA, founded in 2006 by the Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation is a self-identified NGO but represents agri-business interests. AGRA is one of the Gates Foundation's top funded programs, having received \$638 million from the BMGF since its founding (2/3 of its budget). Despite this, AGRA has failed to meet their goals for increasing crop yields and undernourishment increased by 30% in the countries where AGRA has active programs.³⁹

While AGRA is supposedly an African led institution centering farmers, the organization puts forward a top-down Green Revolution agenda focused on funding science and research for seeds and chemicals to infiltrate African farming systems.⁴⁰ AGRA establishes and funds networks of pesticide and seed companies and public agencies to sell inputs to African farmers. Additionally, AGRA lobbies African governments to enact policy changes that prioritize seed and agrochemical companies, promoting patenting seeds or the weakening of regulations that protect against GMOs.⁴¹ AGRA has pushed small-scale farmers into the larger market economy and into contracts with corporations, looping them into an infrastructure of 10,000 agro-dealers selling seeds, fertilizer, and pesticides.⁴² Despite being a nonprofit, AGRA is in deep with agribusiness and is supported by the WEF, global philanthropies and global North development organizations. Due to this support, they have quickly become a major player working to expand the industrial agricultural model in rural communities that have worked tirelessly to resist incorporation into global markets.⁴³

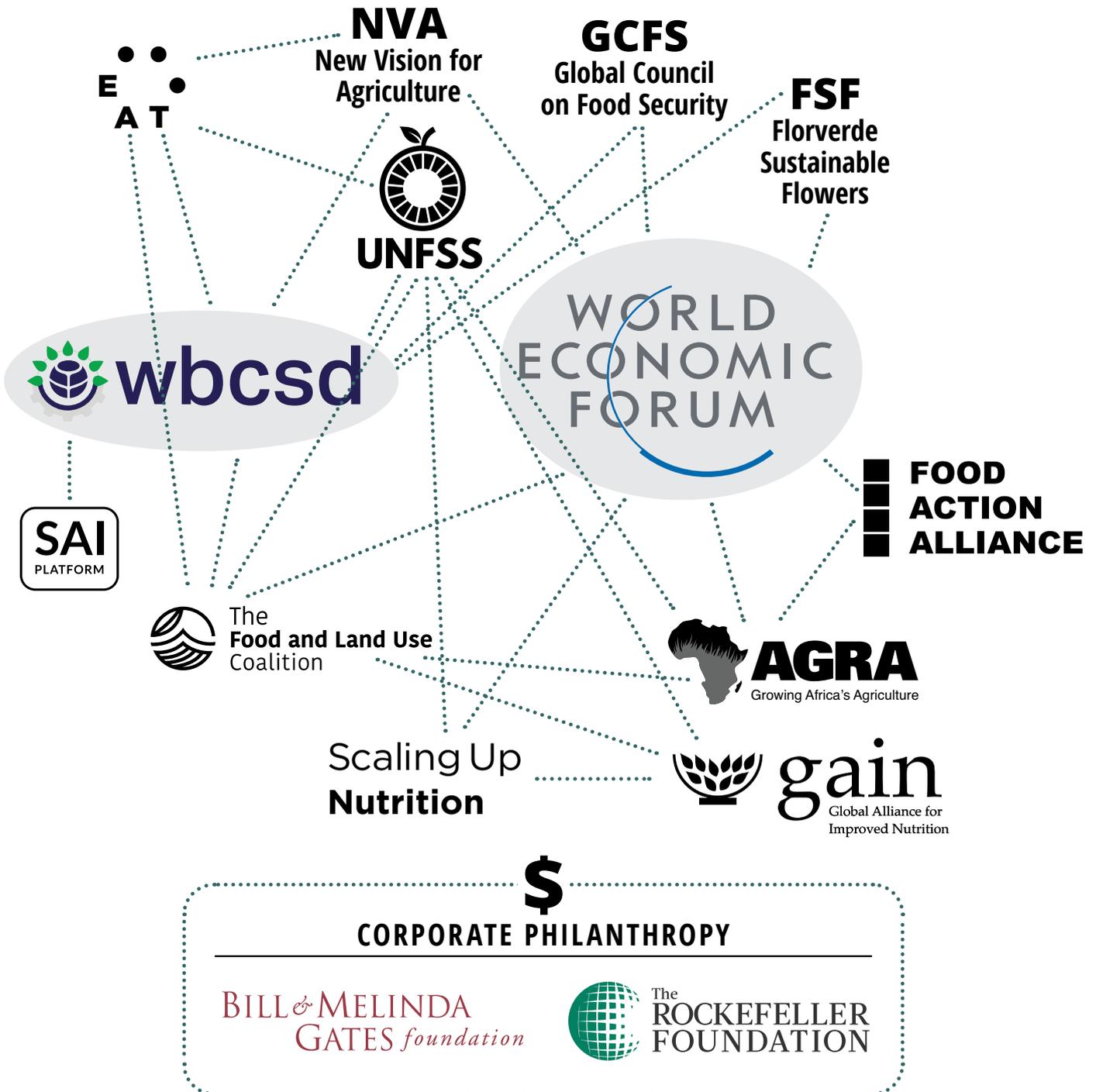
AGRA is closely connected to the agrochemical industry through the Africa Green Revolution Forum (AGRF), specifically Bayer, Corteva and Yara. The AGRF website boasts about their Agribusiness deal room where they connect 400 companies to investors and host 800 companies for networking opportunities.⁴⁴

AGRA's President, Agnes Kalibata was appointed Special Envoy for the UNFSS by Guterres without any public or multilateral consultation in this appointment. Over 500+ civil society organizations have criticized this decision as a clear conflict of interest for a private interest and Big Ag focused "non-profit" that is in need of funding to lead the Summit.⁴⁵ AGRA currently has a fundraising drive of \$1 billion.⁴⁶ Kalibata is also a Co-Chair of Ambassador's Network for FOLU, another conflict of interest as FOLU has connections to the Big Ag industry as well, including Unilever, Nestle, Cargill, DowDuPont, Coca Cola, DSM, and Yara International.

Interconnections, revolving doors and networks of MSIs

GRAPHIC 7

Interconnections between MSIs and other corporate actors in the UNFSS



MSIs, corporate philanthropies, and other corporate actors within the UNFSS are deeply connected to each other - sitting on each other's governance bodies, sharing revolving doors of people in leadership positions and joint convening of other MSIs. Below we investigate just some of these interconnections, which allow them to jointly promote their agenda in a wide variety of spaces and issues, almost forming a parallel informal structure to multilateral governance systems.

The WBCSD along with the WEF takes a leadership role as chairpersons or members of governing bodies on major multistakeholder institutions including the Eat Lancet Commission on Sustainable Healthy Food Systems, New Vision for Agriculture (NVA), the Global Council on Food Security, and the Florverde Sustainable Flowers. WBCSD is also deeply embedded in Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) and FOLU.

A previous Vice President of AGRA is now a member of the WEF's Executive Committee and is leading the Food Systems Initiative at the WEF.⁴⁷ The MSI Food Action Alliance is led by the WEF and created at Davos in collaboration with Rabobank, Bayer/Monsanto, AGRA, IFAD, and the FAO, all names that continue to pop up surrounding the UNFSS.⁴⁸

AGRA's President, Agnes Kalibata is also a Co-Chair of the Ambassador's Network for FOLU. FOLU's core partners include AGRA, EAT, GAIN, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), SYSTEMIQ, WBCSD, World Resource Institute (WRI), and FOLU is supported by MAVA Foundation, Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation, Norway's International Climate and Forests Initiative, and UK AID.⁴⁹ FOLU emerged from the Business & Sustainable Development Commission that was created in the WEF's 2016 meeting in Davos. FOLU has a role in the Champions Network of the UNFSS with Claudia Martínez Zutela as a Vice-Chair for Research.

EAT consists of the EAT Forum, EAT Foundation, and the EAT-Lancet Commission on Sustainable Healthy Food Systems. On EAT's Board sits the WEF and the Wellcome Trust and the Advisory Board includes the President of the WBCSD. The Rockefeller Foundation is also part of EAT's "engagement stakeholders." EAT has a close relationship with the WEF. The founder of EAT, Gunhild Stordalen, was appointed as Young Global Leader by the WEF in 2015, when EAT was still an initiative within the Stordalen Foundation portfolio in 2013, and before it was established independently in 2016 by the Stockholm Resilience Center and the Wellcome Trust. A member of EAT's Advisory Board is on the Advisory Committee of the UNFSS. Stordalen, the founder of EAT is the Chair of Action Track 2, "Shift to Sustainable and Healthy Consumption Patterns" of the UNFSS and Francesco Branca is an EAT-Lancet Commissioner and a Director at WHO, the anchor agency for Action Track 2.⁵⁰

SUN was launched in 2010 through a meeting with the IMF and the World Bank. The SUN Business Network (SBN) is co-run by GAIN and has funding from the BMGF. Two previous coordinators for SUN are on the advisory committee of the UNFSS. Additionally, SUN plays a leadership role in Action Track 5.

Agrochemical and corporate giants including Unilever, Cargill, and Nestlé are all part of FOLU, SAI (Sustainable Agriculture Initiative) and NVA (New Vision for Agriculture).⁵¹ Bunge, Dow DuPont, Louis Dreyfus, Heineken, Coca-Cola are members of NVA and FOLU and Rabobank, the Malabo Montpellier Panel, AGRA, SUN, BSDC, the World Bank/IFC, the African Union, the South African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), EAT Foundation, the WRI, agrifood and seed companies DSM and Yara International, Sweden, and the WEF are all part of NVA and FOLU.⁵²

The BMGF is deeply involved in the Summit, initially through Agnes Kalibata's role as Special Envoy and through their funding of the CGIAR, AGRA, SUN, GAIN, and UN Agencies. Rockefeller Foundation is one of the founders of AGRA along with the BMGF. As AGRA embarks on their current fundraising initiative, The Rockefeller Foundation also has been noted to be organizing a fund for Kalibata's role as the UN Special Envoy to the summit.⁵³

Not only is Rockefeller allied with the BMGF and a founder of AGRA, they are also part of EAT's engagement stakeholders and heavily tied to FOLU. FOLU has 52 ambassadors with Agnes Kalibata of AGRA (Special Envoy to UNFSS), Paul Polman (Chair of the International Chamber of Commerce) who is on the Board of Trustees of Rockefeller and Shenggen Fan (CGIAR) and co-chairs of the Ambassadors network. Rockefeller's partner organization, Thought for Food, also has a leadership position in the UNFSS Advisory Committee.

ENDNOTES

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In this 25th year anniversary of food sovereignty, we reaffirm our unity and commitment to push for radically transformative strategies which recognize peoples' needs, accord dignity, respect nature, put people above profits, resist corporate capture, and work collectively towards a fair and decent food system for all.

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