

June 11, 2010

President Bill Clinton
United Nations Office of the Special Envoy for Haiti
One United Nations Plaza, DC1 – 7th Floor
New York, NY 10017

Dear President Clinton:

I am a concerned citizen who has watched the tragic descent of Haiti into chaos and chronic dependency on outside assistance, when, less than forty years ago, it met most of its own food needs. The recovery from the January, 2010, earthquake is an opportunity to approach Haiti differently and to build sustainable farms that will not escalate dependency, but rather, support ways to stabilize Haiti's now collapsed agricultural sector.

Approximately 10,000 Haitian farmers marched in the Central Plateau region on June 4, protesting the use of hybrid seeds that are arriving now in Haiti under the auspices of USAID and donated by the Monsanto Corporation. The farmers say that they do not want to back any plan that appears to cultivate dependence on foreign assistance to grow food. As you work toward Haiti's recovery, I urge you to consult with peasant farmer organizations, such as the Peasant Movement of Papay, to ensure that farmers have a central role in deciding how to boost food production in Haiti, so that the country may feed itself. In this way, funds could be directed toward the support of sustainable small farms and address soil conservation, environmental rehabilitation and erosion control.

Prior to the earthquake, I heard of plans for a number of foreign and Haitian businesses who wanted to promote jatropha as a new cash crop, reportedly for bio-diesel production. I fear that emphasizing more industrial approaches to agriculture for export will, once again, displace staple commodities in Haiti and aggravate hunger in large sectors of Haitian society.

I believe that Haitians need to determine how Haiti moves into the future. So, Haitian farmers need to decide what style of agriculture is best for the land they've farmed for centuries, else we return to old patterns of paternalism and colonial behavior that do more harm than good.

Sincerely,