

June 11, 2010

His Excellency Raymond Joseph
Ambassador to the United States
231 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20008

Your Excellency:

I write as a concerned U.S. citizen who understands the need to boost food production following Haiti's devastating January, 2010, earthquake. It is imperative that the government listen closely to the voices of Haitian farmers, many of whom oppose the use of hybrid seeds and chemical pesticides, as well as any plan that appears to cultivate dependence on foreign imports to grow food to feed their families and their communities.

I appreciate that the Ministry of Agriculture refused to accept a donation of GMO's. So I am dismayed by the Haitian government's acceptance of more than 400 tons of hybrid seed, donated by the Monsanto Corporation and distributed through channels established by the WINNER Project, under the auspices of USAID. While some of those seeds are already in Haiti, approximately 10,000 small farmers marched near Hinche on June 4 to oppose planting those seeds. News reports indicate that other companies are also sending hybrid seeds. Since small farmers are the backbone of Haiti's farming enterprise, I believe it is wise to listen to them. Their concerns are clear:

- Hybrid seeds require farmers to buy new seed for each planting season, an expense that may drive small farmers into debt as it has in other countries;
- Distribution increases the risk of losing Haiti's indigenous seeds and biodiversity;
- Industrial methods of agriculture do not translate easily to small farms, where people are less protected from the pesticides and fungicides that coat seeds;
- Opening the market to outside corporations at such a vulnerable time may endanger the local economy.

I urge you to reject approaches to crop production that are opposed by small farmers in Haiti and to engage organizations of small farmers, such as the Peasant Movement of Papay, about how to move forward in ways that support sustainable local farms.

Sincerely,