

# INVESTING IN FOOD SECURITY? PHILANTHROCAPITALISM, BIOTECHNOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT

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# New Alliance

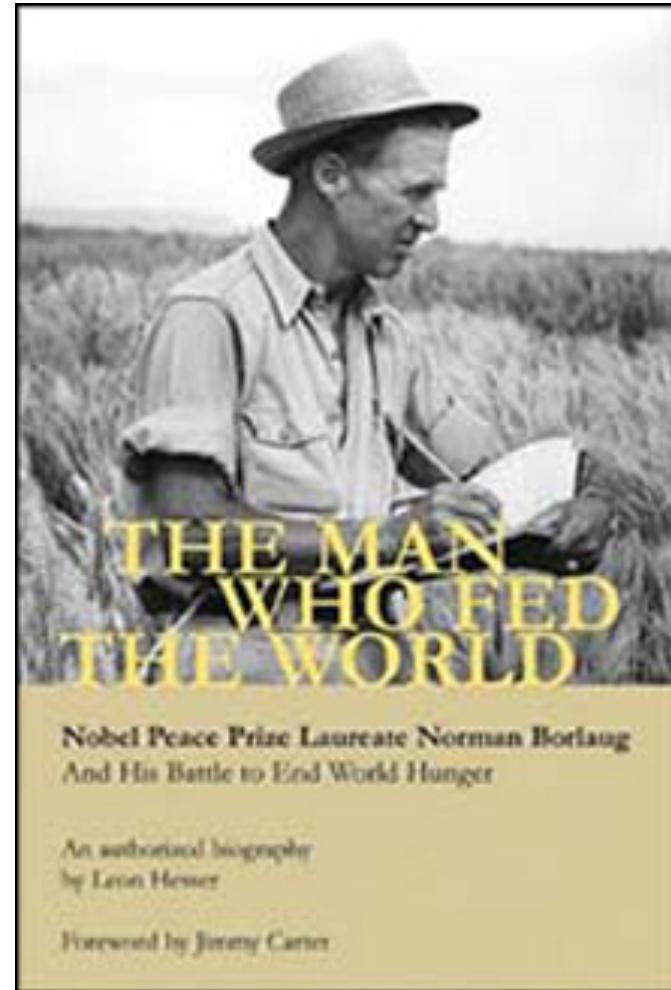
## *for Food Security and Nutrition*

- US initiative – endorsed by G8
- aims to ‘help lift 50 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa out of poverty in the next 10 years by supporting agricultural development’
- seed/input policies and regulations, land use rights, trade liberalisation, access to credit, nutrition action planning
- agri-business corporations to play a key role
- e.g. Mozambique – committed to “systematically cease distribution of free and unimproved seeds except for pre-identified staple crops in emergency situations”

Philanthropy

Biotechnology

Development



# The 'Green Revolution'

'Green', of course, was implicitly opposed to 'red' and was signalling, like a flag, that social reform was not necessary, since technical means in agriculture ... alone were supposed to solve the problem of hunger'

Spitz 1987:56

# Philanthropy (US)

- Philanthropy 1.0 – scientific philanthropy
- *Philanthropy 2.0 – focus on (public) institutions*
- Philanthropy 3.0 – ‘connecting to the market’ (‘philanthrocapitalism’)

*‘a new scientific approach and a new institutional arrangement’ (Cullather 2004:232)*

‘The basic problems concerning rice are *universal* problems, which can be properly attacked in one *central* laboratory, which would then make the results available to all. Many of the really fundamental physiological, biochemical and genetic problems are essentially *independent of geography* and are certainly independent of political boundaries; so that these problems could effectively and efficiently be attacked in *one central institute*’

David Chandler, IRRI’s first Director General (1992:2)

# Miracle rice culture

*changing mindsets, opening markets*

‘Even if [IR8] wasn’t such a spectacular producer ... one would advocate pushing miracle rice culture if only to train the Filipino farmer into thinking in terms of techniques, machines, fertilizers, schedules and experiments’

Rafael Salas, Executive Secretary to President Marcos and Chief Action Officer of the National Rice Sufficiency Program 1966-69 (Cullather 2004:244)

# Philanthropy: radical or conservative?

‘Objections to the foundations upon which society is based are not in order .... It is criminal to waste our energies in endeavouring to uproot, when all we can profitably or possibly accomplish is to bend the universal tree of humanity a little in the direction most favourable to the production of good fruit under existing circumstances’

Carnegie 1889



# Two cases

- Golden Rice



- Drought tolerant maize



# ‘Golden Rice’

- Rockefeller Foundation – Rice Biotech Program (1984-1999)
- Public Sector – transformation in ETH (Switzerland) + EU funds
- IP conundrum - transfer to Syngenta + ‘Humanitarian Board’
- Transfer to public research institutions in Asia – back-cross into *indica* varieties (2001-8)
- Nutrition and post harvest research, prep for regulation (ongoing)



# What *is* Golden Rice?

silver bullet

GM poster child

institutional experiment



# An institutional experiment

- bridging *Philanthropy 2.0* and *3.0*
- from exploratory research to ‘a new type of public private partnership’
- model of ‘free’ technology transfer – IPR regime no obstacle
- who/where is ‘the innovator’? Top-down technology transfer
- ‘humanitarian project’ as advocacy platform (regulatory politics)



# Philanthropy 3.0

## *Innovation, impact, influence*

‘Our new work focuses on specifically defined, *time-limited initiatives* that address big problems where we feel our involvement can bring a distinct and comparative advantage ...we are tackling problems that require us to be more nimble ... when the problems are *urgent* and time-sensitive, as well as continuing to invest in those that require *longer-term* commitment. We are seeking *novel and newer forms of partnerships* with a variety of players.’

Judith Rodin, CEO Rockefeller Foundation (Brilliant *et al.* 2007)

# Drought tolerant maize (WEMA)

- ‘Holy Grail’ for crop research in Sub Saharan Africa
- new frame – climate change
- *African* technology broker/ implementer (AATF)
- technology transfer model - ‘donated’ gene (Monsanto)
- back-crossed into *hybrids*



BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation

# Framing the problem – and solution

**‘One of the greatest attributes of biotechnology is its *scale-neutral* applicability.** The power of the technology is delivered through a seed that can be grown by any farmer, regardless of their operations and farm size, without additional equipment or large capital investment. Smallholder farmers around the world make up 90% of the customer base using these products, demonstrating the scale neutral value of the technology.

**‘This “technology gap” is largely due to a lack of *science-based regulatory frameworks* that would allow testing and evaluation of new agricultural products and reliable delivery systems to reach resource poor farmers... Unless efforts are made now to begin establishing functional regulatory capacity and equipping seed delivery systems, it is unlikely farmers in SSA will be given the choice to benefit from DT technology without an additional decade or more of sequential efforts after its launch elsewhere in the world.**

**‘Enabling access to the DT product through an approach that maximizes *farmer choice* is a major long-term goal of this project... Supporting [resource poor farmers] transition to use [best management practices] and access to *hybrid* seed and extension services will be critical to ensure they realize the maximum benefits of the DT trait.’**

WEMA promotional literature (quoted in Brooks *et al.* 2009a)

# WEMA: learning from Golden Rice?

- **Silver bullet?**

- a 'package' - *technical fix* + *policy fix* + *market fix* (Scoones 2005)
- but – as with Golden Rice – no concrete product, yet...

- **GM battleground?**

- less contestation – claims more measured, 'opposition' less organised
- continuity – 'humanitarian' project as policy lever (regulatory politics)
- focus on GM – distracts from 'silent switch to hybrids' (Chinsinga 2011)

- **Institutional experimentation... continued?**

- domesticating the model – brokered by an *African* institution
- but – maintains top-down model => focus on donated *technology* – and on technology *donor* ('white man's burden')



# Implications

- Golden Rice and WEMA: what are they for? What role in innovation systems? (Bio)hegemony (Newell 2009, Morvaridi 2012)?
- stabilised as *biopolitical* objects in globalised/polarised sci-pol debates => speculating on hope/hype (cf. Novas 2006, Sunder Rajan 2006)
- time dimension: rhetoric of urgency, but influencing/shaping future contours of industry/regulatory environment (cf. Mytelka)
- role of philanthropy (old and new) – technical/institutional experimentation – but narrow, partial – who wins, who loses?
- ‘farmer choice’ discourse – discerning consumers or passive objects of science/development policy? (Brooks *et al.* 2013) What ‘unintended’ effects?
- backdrop to ‘New Alliance’ – emphasis on corporate investment, blurring the boundary between ‘philanthropy’ and ‘investment’?

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