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By: Alex Crawley, Staff Member

Although Bill Gates is probably most famous for being the self-made billionaire who created the powerhouse Microsoft, he has recently made headlines for issues far removed from software.[1] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn1) Lately, he has been speaking out about the funding for agricultural research, or rather, the lack thereof.[2] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn2) In addition to speaking out on BBC'S *Today*,[3] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn3) he recently devoted nearly his entire annual letter on behalf of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which was twenty-four pages long, to the issue of world hunger and to encouraging investment into agricultural research.[4] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn4)

Gates' letter focuses mainly on the "15% of the world [just over 1 billion people] in extreme poverty." [5] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn5) He is urging more people to "mak[e] the choice to keep on helping extremely poor people build self-sufficiency," and emphasizing that, while farming is integral to poor countries, rich countries have largely turned their backs on agriculture.[6] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn6) Considering that only \$3 billion per year is spent globally on agricultural research, he has a valid point.[7] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn7)

The Gates Foundation has spent about \$2 billion dollars over the past five years to supplement research that would help to alleviate the global food crisis.[8] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn8) Gates is especially focused on the research into genetically modified foods, and has specifically praised the work of Norman Borlaug, a Nobel Prize winner who helped create new strains of wheat that were resistant to wheat stem rust, a fungus that had previously plagued wheat crops.[9] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn9) He is advocating for more innovations like this one, especially considering that new forms of wheat rust have since developed and moved from Uganda to Iran and Yemen.[10] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn10)

Gates' position on agricultural research has created some otherwise unlikely allies and piqued the interest of many. The Crop Protection Association Society has endorsed his view internationally, and has agreed that "high-tech food production systems" are an integral part of the answer to "the food poverty crisis." [11] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn11) Meanwhile, U.S. groups, like the U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance, have also taken an interest.[12] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn12)

Gates' plea comes at a crucial time. The EU's policies are currently inhibiting innovative agricultural research,[13] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn13) and the USDA has recently decreased its research centers in response to congressional budget cuts.[14] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn14) The Gates Foundation, however, has given grants to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations[15] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn15) and the International Food Policy Research Institute.[16] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn16) Hopefully, the Gate's Foundation good-will initiative will inspire other organizations to invest in this area "where there is less profit opportunity but where the impact

for those in need is very high.”[17] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn17) Otherwise, “one in seven people will continue living needlessly on the edge of starvation.”[18] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_edn18)

[1] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref1) Logan Hawkes, *GMO Crops Get Big Backer in Bill Gates*, Western Farm Press, 1 (Feb. 1, 2012, 11:21 AM), <http://westernfarmpress.com/government/gmo-crops-get-big-backer-bill-gates?page=1> (<http://westernfarmpress.com/government/gmo-crops-get-big-backer-bill-gates?page=1>).

[2] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref2) *Gates Foundation Calls for More Ag Research Funding*, The United States Agricultural & Food Law and Policy Blog, <http://www.agandfoodlaw.com/2012/02/gates-foundation-calls-for-more-ag.html> (<http://www.agandfoodlaw.com/2012/02/gates-foundation-calls-for-more-ag.html>).

[3] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref3) Dan Colombini & Mike Stones, *Bill Gates and CPA Urge Support for GM Techniques*, Foodmanufacture.co.uk (Jan. 25, 2012), <http://www.foodmanufacture.co.uk/World-News/Bill-Gates-and-CPA-urge-support-for-GM-techniques> (<http://www.foodmanufacture.co.uk/World-News/Bill-Gates-and-CPA-urge-support-for-GM-techniques>).

[4] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref4) Hawkes, *supra* note 1.

[5] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref5) *2012 Annual Letter From Bill Gates*, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1 (Jan. 2012), <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/annual-letter/2012/Documents/2012-annual-letter-english.pdf> (<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/annual-letter/2012/Documents/2012-annual-letter-english.pdf>).

[6] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref6) *2012 Annual Letter From Bill Gates*, *supra* note 5 at.

[7] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref7) *2012 Annual Letter From Bill Gates*, *supra* note 5 at 3.

[8] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref8) Hawkes, *supra* note 1.

[9] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref9) *2012 Annual Letter From Bill Gates*, *supra* note 5 at 5.

[10] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref10) *2012 Annual Letter From Bill Gates*, *supra* note 5 at 5.

[11] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref11) Colombini & Stones, *supra* note 3.

[12] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref12) *Bill Gates and CPA Urge Support for GM Techniques*, U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance (Jan. 25, 2012) <http://usfraonline.org/2012/01/bill-gates-and-cpa-urge-support-for-gm-techniques/> (<http://usfraonline.org/2012/01/bill-gates-and-cpa-urge-support-for-gm-techniques/>).

[13] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref13) Colombini & Stones, *supra* note 3.

[14] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref14) Hawkes, *supra* note 1 at 2.

[15] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref15) *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Nov. 2011), <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Grants-2011/Pages/Food-and-Agriculture-Organization-of-the-United-Nations-OPP1029955.aspx> (<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Grants-2011/Pages/Food-and-Agriculture-Organization-of-the-United-Nations-OPP1029955.aspx>).

[16] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref16) *International Food Policy Research Institute*, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Nov. 2011), <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Grants-2011/Pages/International-Food-Policy-Research-Institute-OPPGD1451.aspx> (<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Grants-2011/Pages/International-Food-Policy-Research-Institute-OPPGD1451.aspx>).

[17] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref17) *2012 Annual Letter From Bill Gates*, *supra* note 5.

[18] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Crawley, Alex/2012/#_ednref18) *2012 Annual Letter From Bill Gates*, *supra* note 5.

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