

## ***Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Commits \$300M (€255M) to Help Farmers in Africa and Asia Cope with Climate Change***

Gates Foundation funding complements investments from the European Commission (\$318M/€270M) also announced today, bringing total agriculture R&D commitments to over \$600M (around €525M)

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

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PARIS, Dec. 12, 2017 — Today at the One Planet Summit in Paris, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation pledged \$300M (around €255M) over the next three years (2018-2020) to support agricultural research that will help the world's poorest farmers better adapt to increasingly challenging growing conditions brought about by climate change, including rising temperatures, extreme weather patterns (droughts and floods), diseases, poor soil fertility, and attacks from crop pests.

Two-thirds of the world's poorest people live in Africa and Asia, and roughly 800 million of them rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. These smallholder farmers play a negligible role in generating carbon emissions but they suffer some of the harshest effects of climate change. As the climate changes, farmers' ability to produce crops to feed their families or earn an income will be increasingly threatened. Livelihoods will be destroyed and climate-related pressures could force people to abandon their homes and communities, in search of better conditions.

Poor farmers in developing countries will need the most innovative tools and technologies to adapt to the effects of climate change. There is an urgent need to equip them with the tools that can make their crops more productive, sustainable, and resilient in the face of a rapidly changing environment. The Gates Foundation's announcement today is in direct response to the needs articulated by developing countries in their adaptation plans in three areas:

**Crop improvement:** at a time where the world population is growing, new discoveries are on the horizon to help meet the growing demand for food. These include boosting photosynthesis to generate major increases in crop yields and enhancing the natural processes employed by plants such as soybeans and peanuts that draw nitrogen from the air into the soil for more efficient crops that use less water and fertilizer. Combining big data with robotics to scan large fields of crops will also help breeders better understand plant characteristics (height, leaf structure, growth) and ultimately improve the speed of crop breeding.

**Crop Protection:** investments will specifically help farmers protect their crops from drought, floods and heat, as well as attacks from plant pests and diseases. Scientists already are producing breakthrough varieties, including drought-tolerant rice and maize and heat-tolerant beans, and developing new ways to detect and control diseases that can destroy cassava, sweet potatoes and yams -- crops that are crucial to feeding 800 million people in West and Central Africa.

**Crop management:** in addition to new technologies, innovations in managing existing farmland will help give farmers new insights into the most advanced practices, particularly ways to help preserve and enhance soil fertility that allow them to sustainably boost production.

The Gates Foundation's commitment comes in addition to a \$318M (€270M) commitment from the European Commission announced today, with additional commitments from Member States still to be finalised. Taken together, the funding from the European Commission and the Gates Foundation to help farmers increase crop yields, respond to environmental threats, and adapt their farming methods to climate change will amount to over \$600M (around €525M) over the next three years.

Also today, the Gates Foundation and the BNP Paribas Foundation, in partnership with the Agropolis Foundation, launched the One Planet Fellowship, a €15M 5-year program to support 600 young African and European researchers who are working to help African farmers adapt to climate change.

Speaking at the One Planet Summit, Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, said:

“Agriculture is the most promising path out of poverty for individuals and countries. The disproportionate impact of climate change on the world’s poorest people means that there is a more urgent need than ever to help the poorest farmers improve their productivity in the increasingly tough conditions that they continue to face.

“We are excited to join forces with the European Commission to drive forward research and innovation that will help farmers improve their crop yields, respond to climate pressures and have access to the latest developments in farming practices. Together we can help smallholder farmers improve their livelihoods, lift more families out of poverty, and contribute to a sustainable global food system.”

**ENDS --**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Dr. Susan Desmond-Hellmann and Co-Chair William H. Gates, Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

### **About the BNP Paribas Foundation**

Under the oversight of the Foundation of France, the BNP Paribas Foundation has been a major player in corporate philanthropy for 30 years. It also encourages and contributes to BNP Paribas’ philanthropic policy growth in all parts of the world wherever the Bank operates. The BNP Paribas Foundation’s activities are aimed at multidisciplinary philanthropy, supporting innovative projects dedicated to culture, social inclusion and the environment. It pays close attention to the quality of its commitments to its partners. Since 1984, over 300 cultural projects, 40 research programs and 1,000 social and educational initiatives have earned its support in France and around the world.

### **About the Agropolis Foundation**

The Agropolis Foundation promotes and supports high-level research and higher education in agricultural sciences and sustainable development. Emanating from the world-class Montpellier scientific community, it supports an international network of over 400 foreign partner institutions, including the AWARD program. In the past 10 years, the Agropolis Foundation has granted €40 million to scientific projects on cultivated plant diversity, biology and breeding, crop protection, sustainable agriculture and food systems, agro-ecological transition, adaptation to climate change, food processing and quality, and socio-economics and public policies.

### **Press Enquiries**

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