

Overview: Bill & Melinda Gates Agricultural Innovations

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is in the process of creating a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Bill & Melinda Gates Agricultural Innovations, LLC, which seeks to accelerate the development of innovations supported by the foundation's Agricultural Development team. The entity, to be known as Gates Ag One, aims to speed up efforts to provide smallholder farmers in developing countries, the many of whom are women, with access to the affordable tools and innovations they need to sustainably improve crop productivity and adapt to the effects of climate change.

In two of the fastest growing regions of the world—sub-Saharan Africa, home to around 1 billion people, and South Asia, with a population of about 1.8 billion—approximately 60 percent of the population lives in rural areas that typically depend on smallholder agriculture for food and income. In sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture accounts for more than half of the region's employment, and for South Asia it contributes about 40 percent. Yields on farms in these regions are already far below what farmers elsewhere in the world achieve, and climate change will make their crops even less productive.

Gates Ag One will collaborate with a diverse community of regional and international public- and private-sector partners, as well as interested governments, to enable the advancement of resilient, yield-enhancing seeds and traits globally and facilitate the introduction of those breakthroughs into specific crops essential to smallholder farmers, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

The goal of Gates Ag One is to help the foundation deliver on its mission to empower smallholder farmers with the affordable, high-quality tools, technologies, and resources they need to lift themselves out of poverty. The foundation is still in the early planning stages, and we look forward to sharing additional details in the future.

FAQ: Bill & Melinda Gates Agricultural Innovations

1. Why are you launching Bill & Melinda Gates Agricultural Innovations?

At the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we believe that everyone has the right to live a healthy, productive life. But many of the world's poorest people—those who make their living through agriculture—will not have that opportunity unless they can access the innovations needed to adapt to the challenges caused by climate change.

That's why we are launching Bill & Melinda Gates Agricultural Innovations—also known as Gates Ag One. This new 501(c) (3) nonprofit will advance high-impact discoveries that can help smallholder farmers adapt to climate change and make food production in low- and middle-income countries more productive, resilient, and sustainable. It will accelerate the development of cutting-edge technologies into useful products; work with interested governments to introduce those breakthroughs into specific crops essential to smallholder farmers, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia; and work with local, regional, and international partners in the public and private sectors to commercialize resilient, yield-enhancing seeds and traits globally.

2. Will the creation of Gates Ag One affect the foundation's existing programs?

Gates Ag One will work closely with the Gates Foundation's Agricultural Development team, which currently funds efforts that are developing new tools and technologies designed to meet the needs of smallholder farmers. Because different capabilities are required to translate these discoveries into affordable products, Gates Ag One aims to provide the expertise needed to accelerate this translational work. It will complement the foundation's existing programs and help us achieve our goal of supporting smallholder farmers' own efforts to get what they need to create a better life for their families, communities, and countries.

The foundation is optimistic that new investments in translational product development can expand the solutions available to smallholder farmers. While many challenges linked to agricultural development and climate change can be addressed with currently available approaches, other challenges require innovative solutions. With greater investments in research and a range of other critical interventions—including sustainable approaches to land and water management, affordable insurance, and access to markets—farmers can have access to a full toolbox of strategies to adapt to climate change.

3. Why does the foundation focus on climate adaptation in its agricultural development work rather than emissions reduction?

Climate change affects us all. But the people least responsible for climate change are already experiencing its most devastating impacts—especially the millions of smallholder farmers in low- and middle-income countries who have long suffered extreme poverty due to low crop yields. They urgently need options to adapt to the surge of climate-related weather extremes, now threatening their efforts to increase yields and find a pathway out of poverty.

To that end, any effort to address the impact of climate change must deal with both the future crisis and the present one—preventing the worst impacts of a changing climate by eliminating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to both the changes that are already here and those that are inevitable.

While adaptation and mitigation are two very different tasks, both require a broad combination of new policies and technologies. And both need innovation. The [Global Commission on Adaptation report](#) calls for a mix of new ideas, as well as an increased focus on longstanding, evidenced-based interventions to supply farmers with more, better, and new solutions to boost productivity and combat the threats posed by climate change.

Smallholder farmers need new innovations to help them adapt. Without these innovations, farmers will be forced into increasingly unsustainable practices to feed their families while coping with climate change—like expanding crop production and grazing into forests and other fragile ecosystems. Such tactics would further damage the environment and exacerbate the effects of climate change.

4. Who will Gates Ag One partner with?

Gates Ag One will collaborate with a diverse group of local, regional, and international partners—including universities, nonprofits, private-sector companies, governments, international organizations, startups and others—to make the best technologies available to the farmers who need them most.

5. Who will lead Gates Ag One?

Joe Cornelius, currently a director within the foundation's Global Growth & Opportunity Division, will lead Gates Ag One. Other staffing decisions have not yet been made.

6. Where will Gates Ag One be located?

The foundation intends to locate Gates Ag One in the greater St. Louis metropolitan area.

7. What tools and innovations will Gates Ag One focus on?

Gates Ag One will focus on ensuring smallholder farmers have access to a range of interventions and technologies, including innovations emerging from the foundation's Agricultural Development program. For example, one area of research that is critical to help smallholder farmers adapt to climate change and increase sustainability is around increasing water use efficiency for crops.

8. How will Gates Ag One ensure these innovations reach the smallholder farmers who need them most? How will it ensure they're affordable?

Consistent with the foundation's [Global Access](#) principles, Gates Ag One will support the creation of new product development channels informed by the need for innovations that are genuinely affordable for farmers. Affordability is key if we want to ensure the widest possible adoption of these transformative technologies to benefit smallholder farmers and the global community.

9. If I have additional questions, who can answer them?

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