

The soils of war

The real agenda behind agricultural reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq
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In this Briefing, we look at how the US's agricultural reconstruction work in Afghanistan and Iraq not only gives easy entry to US agribusiness and pushes neoliberal policies, something that has always been a primary function of US development assistance, but is also an intrinsic part of the US military campaign in these countries and the surrounding regions.

Seen together with the growing clout that the US and its corporate allies exercise over donor agencies and global bodies - such as the World Bank, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centres, which influence the food and farm policies adopted by the recipient countries - this is an alarming development.

These are not unique cases born from unusual circumstances, but constitute a likely template for US activities overseas, as it continues to expand its "war on terror" and pursue US corporate interests.

Multinational companies move into farming.

Soya has never been grown in Afghanistan and it doesn't form part of the country's culinary tradition, but a new programme, supposedly devised to combat malnutrition, plans to change all that.

- 1) USAID has funded Nutrition and Education International (NEI), set up by Nestle, to teach Afghans to sow and eat soya beans.
- 2) NEI is linked to the World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH), which was founded by the American Soybean Association (ASA) in 2000,
- 3) 4 to organise the distribution of free soya milk to pregnant women and infants throughout the developing world.
- 4) WISHH works with the North American Millers' Association (NAMA), whose members include global giants ADM, Bunge Milling and ConAgro. In Afghanistan NEI works with Stine Seed Company, Iowa, and Gateway Seed Company, Illinois, both of which supply it with genetically modified Roundup soya and Roundup-Ready herbicide to be sold on to the farmers.
- 5) According to NEI, it distributed two tonnes of genetically modified soya seed in Afghanistan in 2005.

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