

## SEEDS OF SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM: THE THIRD “GREEN REVOLUTION”

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**T**here is an illusion that running faster on the chemical and Poison Cartel treadmill, now equipped with Artificial Intelligence and Robots will be more effective in producing more food and feeding the hungry. On the contrary, the tools and technologies of the Poison Cartel have brought the planet and the lives of farmers to the brink with climate havoc, species extinction, water crisis, farmer incomes collapsing to zero and food related diseases killing larger numbers of people.

As Shoshana Zuboff, Professor Emerita at Harvard Business School writes in her book: “Surveillance capitalism is not a technology; it is a logic that imbues technology and commands it into action.”<sup>1</sup>

And as John Hamer, managing director of Monsanto Growth Ventures (Monsanto’s venture capital arm) says: “if you think about it, there are only two people on earth that need to know a lot about remote sensing technology – Monsanto and the CIA.”<sup>2</sup>

When technology is no longer seen as a tool to be assessed, chosen, adopted or rejected, but as a religion, as a civilizing mission, to be forced undemocratically on people, and when means for money making are elevated to human ends, beyond ethical, social, ecological and democratic assessment, we have re-colonisation in a modern garb. But then, as now, exterminating the diversity of life, of cultures, of knowledges, of economies, sovereignties, democracies through violence, for economic gain and political power has to be the objective.

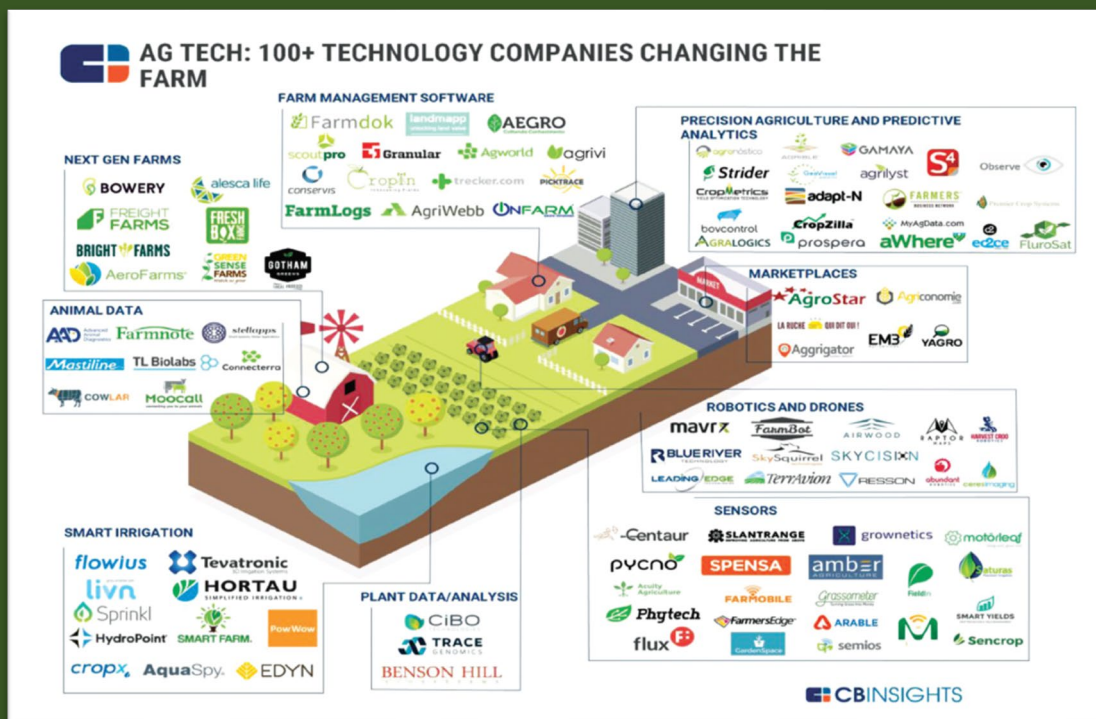
Zuboff reiterates this in her book when she says “Surveillance capitalism is a rogue force driven by novel economic imperatives that disregards social norms and nullifies the elemental rights associated with individual autonomy that are essential to the very possibility of a democratic society.”

Surveillance capitalism refers to an economic system centred around the commodification of personal data with the core purpose of profit-making. Since personal data can be commodified it has become one of the most valuable resources on earth. It is a new mutant form of capitalism that uses tech for its purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> Zuboff, S. (2019). The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power. Profile Books. Pg. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Trotter, Greg. (2016). Monsanto venture capital group brings tech-world approach to agribusiness. Chicago Tribune. Available at: <http://www.startribune.com/monsanto-venture-capital-group-brings-tech-world-approach-to-agribusiness/407653476/>



Source: CBinsights. 2017. *The Ag Tech Market Map: 100+ Startups Powering The Future Of Farming And Agribusiness*. Available at <https://www.cbinsights.com/research/agriculture-tech-market-map-company-list/>

The propaganda for surveillance capitalism is exactly the same that was used in the failed Green Revolution: “To feed the 9.7 billion people in the world in 2050, agriculture efficiency must increase by 35% - 70% and technology is the key. India’s rich mix of farming practices and small landholdings provide a massive data set to inform our models.”<sup>3</sup> Smallholders and their farming practices have been reduced to a “data set” for surveillance capitalism that will “provide valuable insights for the agri industry, financial institutions, growers and policy makers.”<sup>4</sup>

### Seeds of Surveillance: Surveillance Capitalism Enters Indian Agriculture

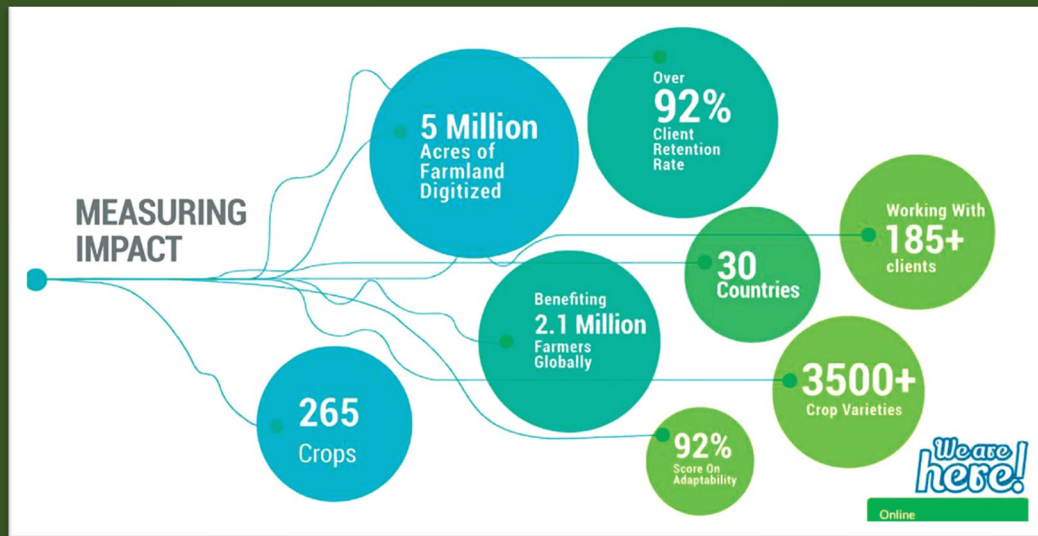
CropIn Technology Pvt. Ltd. a Bengaluru-based company has raised \$12 million in funding. It is funded by the Poison Cartel, Venture Capital Firms and Agtech companies like Chiratae Ventures, Bill and Gates Foundation, Strategic Investment Fund, Seeders Ventures Fund, Syngenta, Bayer and BASF. Its clientele includes PepsiCo, Mahindra & Mahindra, ITC, Field Fresh and McCain.

CropIn claims to use Big Data analytics, artificial intelligence and remote sensing to “analyze data” for 265 crops for agriculture processors, distributors,

<sup>3</sup> Ahuja, A. 2018. CropIn Technology raises \$8 million from Chiratae Ventures, Gates Foundation. Livemint. Available at: [www.livemint.com/Companies/X5TRE10YbgUlagvhN2IDBL/CropIn-Technology-raises-8-million-from-Chiratae-Ventures.html](http://www.livemint.com/Companies/X5TRE10YbgUlagvhN2IDBL/CropIn-Technology-raises-8-million-from-Chiratae-Ventures.html). Accessed on 20 August 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Economic Times. 2019. SaaS-based agri-tech company CropIn registers 300% growth. Available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/small-biz/startups/newsbuzz/saas-based-agri-tech-company-cropin-registers-300-growth/articleshow/68147881.cms?from=mdr>. Accessed on 23 August, 2019.

inputs providers, lenders and insurers. The start-up claims to be building an “agri-information dataset” to detect patterns and “predict the future” of a variety of crops.



Source: <https://www.cropln.com/>

The company has a tie-up with the Department of Agriculture (DOA), Government of Karnataka, to “help” farmers create “more value” for their crops. The project aims to “assist” 4.15 lakh farmers across 30 districts of Karnataka in digitising 3.4 lakh acres of farmlands.

In 2017, Cropln started a project in collaboration with the Department of Horticulture (DOH), Andhra Pradesh, to digitize farms under two FPO in the districts of Chittoor and Krishna. It also works with the Bihar State Government and is part of the Jeevika project that uses “smart technologies” for climate resilient agriculture.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, the World Bank has chosen Cropln as the technology partner in the public–private partnership project of the Government of India and World Bank.

Cropln is also partnering with the Government of Punjab’s department of agriculture and welfare to plan the certification and traceability of seed potato. Punjab Agri Export Corporation (PAGREXCO) has been reported to deploy blockchain technology with the help of barcode, QR code and geo-tagging to undertake certification and traceability of seed potato right from nucleus to seed level (harvest).

Furthermore, it has been reported that India’s agriculture ministry is working with National Informatics Centre on a 5 crore (50 million) rupee project which involves rolling out a software which will barcode all seeds. This has been justified on the grounds of making everything “more transparent” and “more traceable” and to “weed out poor quality seeds”. The seeds will be “tracked” throughout the

<sup>5</sup> How Cropln is helping the farmer ecosystem. 2018. Available at: <http://smartceo.co/cropln-helping-farmer-ecosystem/>. Accessed on 28th August 2019.

supply chain. There are also discussions with state governments to adopt the same software. What is even more troubling is that 5,000 private seed companies have already come on board with this, profits of course being the motivation. The goal of this initiative, within two years, is to know how much of which seed is sold in which area.

However, it must be reiterated that farmers' community seed exchange of farmers' varieties has total reliability and transparency and there is no need for surveillance technologies to monitor and deny farmers' sense of quality and farmers' freedom.

It was recently reported that the 18,000-crore (180,000 million) seed industry has called for the introduction of a National Agricultural Policy and expedition of the 2019 Seed Bill and Biotech Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) Bill to "ensure policy direction and predictability".<sup>6</sup>

The paradigm of seeds of surveillance is one of the combination of digital agriculture, data science and genetic engineering creating higher level of integration of abstractions and instrument for control. This is also why we see today that not only is the old toxic cartel recombining as a new one through mergers, it is moving beyond the convergence of seeds, pesticides and fertilisers to farm equipment, information technology, climate data, soil data and insurance.<sup>7</sup>

Seeds of Surveillance transform the knowledge and knowing from a participatory process of co creation with the earth, her biodiversity, her soils to take better care of the soil and the seed, based on seed and knowledge sovereignty into "data" for increased control over farming by the Poison Cartel, a continuation of the industrial food system, and the basis of an attempt at epistemic imperialism.

It is essential we resist these seeds of surveillance and defend the seeds of freedom.

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<sup>6</sup> Shiva, V and Shiva, K. 2018. The Future of our daily bread: Regeneration or Collapse. Navdanya International / Research foundation for science, technology and ecology, <https://navdanyainternational.org/publications/the-future-of-our-daily-bread-regeneration-or-collapse/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.