

# STOP LAND GRABBING NOW!

## ***Say NO to the principles of “responsible” agro-enterprise investment promoted by the World Bank***

State and private investors, from Citadel Capital to Goldman Sachs, are leasing or buying up tens of millions of hectares of farmlands in Asia, Africa and Latin America for food and fuel production. This land grabbing is a serious threat to the food sovereignty of our peoples and the right to food of our rural communities. In response to this new wave of land grabbing, the World Bank (WB) is promoting a set of seven principles to guide such investments and make them successful. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) have agreed to join the WB in collectively pushing these principles.<sup>1</sup> Their starting point is the fact that the current rush of private sector interest to buy up farmland is risky. After all, the WB has just finalised a study showing the magnitude of this trend and its central focus on transferring rights over agricultural land in developing countries to foreign investors. The WB seems convinced that all private capital flows to expand global agribusiness operations where they have not yet taken hold are good and must be allowed to proceed so that the corporate sector can extract more wealth from the countryside. Since these investment deals are hinged on massive privatisation and transfer of land rights, the WB wants them to meet a few criteria to reduce the risks of social backlash: respect the rights of existing users of land, water and other resources (by paying them off); protect and improve livelihoods at the household and community level (provide jobs and social services); and do no harm to the environment. These are the core ideas behind the WB's seven principles for socially acceptable land grabbing.

These principles will not accomplish their ostensible objectives. They are rather a move to try to legitimize land grabbing. Facilitating the long-term corporate (foreign and domestic) takeover of rural people's farmlands is completely unacceptable no matter which guidelines are followed. The WB's principles, which would be entirely voluntary, aim to distract from the fact that today's global food crisis, marked by more than 1 billion people going hungry each day, will not be solved by large scale industrial agriculture, which virtually all of these land acquisitions aim to promote.

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<sup>1</sup> "Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment that Respects Rights, Livelihoods and Resources" Available at: [http://www.donorplatform.org/component/option,com\\_docman/task,doc\\_view/gid,1280](http://www.donorplatform.org/component/option,com_docman/task,doc_view/gid,1280)

Land grabbing has already started to intensify in many countries over the past 10-15 years with the adoption of deregulation policies, trade and investment agreements, and market oriented governance reforms. The recent food and financial crises have provided the impetus for a surge in land grabbing by governments and financial investors trying to secure agricultural production capacity and future food supplies as well as assets that are sure to fetch high returns. Wealthy governments have sought to lease agricultural lands for long periods of time to feed their populations and industries back home. At the same time, corporations are seeking long term economic concessions for plantation agriculture to produce agro-fuels, rubber, oils, etc. These trends are also visible in coastal areas, where land, marine resources and water bodies are being sold, leased, or developed for tourism to corporate investors and local elites, at the expense of artisanal fishers and coastal communities. One way or the other, agricultural lands and forests are being diverted away from smallhold producers, fishers and pastoralists to commercial purposes, and leading to displacement, hunger and poverty.

With the current farmland grab, corporate driven globalisation has reached a new phase that will undermine peoples' self-determination, food sovereignty and survival as never before. The WB and many governments see land and rights to land, as a crucial asset base for corporations seeking high returns on capital since land is not only the basis for producing food and raw materials for the new energy economy, but also a way to capture water. Land is being revalued on purely economic terms by the WB, governments and corporations and in the process, the multi-functionality, and ecological, social and cultural values of land are being negated. It is thus more important than ever that these resources are defended from corporate and state predation and instead be made available to those who need them to feed themselves and others sustainably, and to survive as communities and societies.

Land grabbing – even where there are no related forced evictions - denies land for local communities, destroys livelihoods, reduces the political space for peasant oriented agricultural policies and distorts markets towards increasingly concentrated agribusiness interests and global trade rather than towards sustainable peasant/smallhold production for local and national markets. Land grabbing will accelerate eco-system destruction and the climate crisis because of the type of monoculture oriented, industrial agricultural production that many of these “acquired” lands will be used for. Promoting or permitting land grabbing violates the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and undermines the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Land grabbing ignores the principles adopted by the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) in 2006 and the recommendations made by the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD).

Land grabbing must be immediately stopped. The WB's principles attempt to create the illusion that land grabbing can proceed without disastrous consequences to peoples, communities, eco-systems and the climate. This illusion is false and misleading. Farmer's and indigenous peoples organisations, social movements and civil society groups largely agree that what we need instead is to:

1. Keep land in the hands of local communities and implement genuine agrarian reform in order to ensure equitable access to land and natural resources.
2. Heavily support agro-ecological peasant, smallhold farming, fishing and pastoralism, including participatory research and training programmes so that

small-scale food providers can produce ample, healthy and safe food for everybody.

3. Overhaul farm and trade policies to embrace food sovereignty and support local and regional markets that people can participate in and benefit from.
4. Promote community-oriented food and farming systems hinged on local people's control over land, water and biodiversity. Enforce strict mandatory regulations that curb the access of corporations and other powerful actors (state and private) to agricultural, coastal and grazing lands, forests, and wetlands.

## **No principles in the world can justify land grabbing!**

**La Via Campesina**

**FIAN**

**Land Research Action Network (LRAN)**

**GRAIN**

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## ***Endorsed by:***

### AFRICA

- African Biodiversity Network (ABN)
- Anywaa Survival Organisation, Ethiopia
- Association Centre Ecologique Albert Schweitzer (CEAS BURKINA), Burkina Faso
- Coordination Nationale des Usagers des Ressources Naturelles du Bassin du Niger au Mali, Mali
- CNCR (Conseil National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux), Sénégal
- Collectif pour la Défense des Terres Malgaches TANY
- Confédération Paysanne du Congo, Congo RDC
- COPAGEN (Coalition pour la protection du patrimoine génétique africaine)
- East African Farmers Federation (EAFF)
- Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF)
- Economic Justice Network of FOCCISA, Southern Africa
- Food Security, Policy and

Advocacy Network (FoodSPAN), Ghana

- FORA/DESC, Niger
- Ghana Civil Society Coalition on Land (CICOL), Ghana
- Haki Ardhi, Tanzania
- Inades-Formation
- IPACC (Indigenous People of Africa Co-ordinating Committee)
- London International Oromo Workshop Group, Ethiopia
- ROPPA (Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest)
- Synergie Paysanne, Bénin

### ASIA

- Aliansi Gerakan Reforma Agraria (AGRA), Indonesia
- All Nepal Peasants' Association (ANPA), Nepal
- Alternative Agriculture Network, Thailand
- Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao (AFRIM), Philippines
- Andhra Pradesh Vyvasaya Vruthidarula Union (APVVU), India

- Anti Debt Coalition (KAU), Indonesia
- Aquila Ismail, Pakistan
- Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)
- Bantad Mountain Range Conservation Network, Thailand
- Biothai (Thailand)
- Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia, Cambodia
- Centre for Agrarian Reform, Empowerment and Transformation, Inc., Philippines
- Centro Saka, Inc., Philippines
- CIDSE, Lao PDR
- Daulat Institute, Indonesia
- Delhi Forum, India
- Focus on the Global South, India, Thailand, Philippines
- Foundation for Ecological Recovery/TERRA, Thailand
- Four Regions Slum Network, Thailand
- Friends of the Earth Indonesia (WALHI), Indonesia
- HASATIL, Timor Leste
- IMSE, India
- Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF), India
- Indonesian Fisher folk Union (SNI), Indonesia
- Indonesian Human Rights Committee for Social Justice (IHCS), Indonesia
- Indonesian Peasant' Union (SPI), Indonesia
- International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), India
- Kelompok Studi dan Pengembangan Prakarsa Masyarakat/Study Group for the People Initiative Development (KSPPM), Indonesia
- KIARA-Fisheries Justice Coalition of Indonesia, Indonesia
- Klongyong and Pichaipuben Land Cooperatives, Thailand
- Land Reform Network of Thailand, Thailand
- Lokoj Institute, Bangladesh
- MARAG, India
- Melanesian Indigenous Land Defense Alliance (MILDA)
- My Village, Cambodia
- National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO), Sri Lanka
- National Fishworkers Forum, India
- National Forum of Forest Peoples and Forest Workers, India
- Northeastern Land Reform Network, Thailand
- Northern Peasant Federation, Thailand
- NZNI, Mongolia
- PARAGOS-Pilipinas, Philippines
- Pastoral Peoples Movement, India
- PCC, Mongolia
- People's Coalition for the Rights to Water (KruHA), Indonesia
- PERMATIL (Permaculture), Timor-Leste
- Perween Rehman, Pakistan
- Project for Ecological Awareness Building (EAB), Thailand
- Roots for Equity, Pakistan
- Sintesa Foundation, Indonesia
- Social Action for Change, Cambodia
- Solidarity Workshop, Bangladesh
- Southern Farmer Federation, Thailand
- Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, Thailand
- The NGO Forum on Cambodia, Cambodia
- Village Focus Cambodia, Cambodia
- Village Focus International, Lao PDR
- World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), Sri Lanka

#### LATIN AMERICA

- Asamblea de Afectados Ambientales, México
- BIOS, Argentina
- COECO-Ceiba (Amigos de la Tierra), Costa Rica
- FIAN Comayagua, Honduras
- Grupo Semillas, Colombia
- Red de Biodiversidad de Costa Rica, Costa Rica
- Red en Defensa del Maiz, México
- REL-UITA

- Sistema de la Investigación de la Problemática Agraria del Ecuador (SIPAE), Ecuador

- Why Hunger, USA

#### EUROPE

- Both Ends, Netherlands
- CADTM, Belgium
- Centre Tricontinental – CETRI, Belgium
- CNCD-11.11.11, Belgium
- Comité belgo-brasileiro, Belgium
- Entraide et Fraternité, Belgium
- FIAN Austria
- FIAN Belgium
- FIAN France
- FIAN Netherlands
- FIAN Norway
- FIAN Sweden
- FUGEA, Belgium
- Guatemala Solidarität, Austria
- SOS Faim – Agir avec le Sud, Belgium
- The Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, Italy
- The Transnational Institute (TNI), Netherlands
- Uniterre, Switzerland

#### NORTH AMERICA

- Agricultural Missions, Inc. (AMI), USA
- Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach, USA
- Cumberland Countians for Peace & Justice, USA
- Grassroots International, USA
- National Family Farm Coalition, USA
- Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility, United Church of Christ, USA
- Pete Von Christierson, USA
- PLANT (Partners for the Land & Agricultural Needs of Traditional Peoples), USA
- Raj Patel, Visiting Scholar, Center for African Studies, University of California at Berkeley, USA
- The Institute for Food and Development Policy (Food First), USA

#### INTERNATIONAL

- FIAN International
- Friends of the Earth International
- GRAIN
- La Via Campesina
- Land Research Action Network (LRAN)
- World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous People (WAMIP)
- World Rainforest Movement (WRM)