

Tell us your story and let us know about your actions against land grabbing

Land grabbing concerns us all and could have disastrous consequences for the future of humanity, impacting heavily on farmers' rights and biodiversity conservation. This is because:

- ✗ It reinforces an agricultural model based on concentrated ownership and intensive monoculture crops. A model which has been judged as a failure by the majority of specialists as it impoverishes the soil, reduces the availability of natural resources such as water, erodes agricultural and food biodiversity, wipes out traditional knowledge, is polluting, puts human health at risk, creates a growing dependence on four crops – rice, corn, wheat and soya - and subjects the price of basic foods to market fluctuations and speculation.
- ✗ It fuels corruption, compromises people's right to self-determination and food sovereignty, exploits the most vulnerable populations, increases the risk of outbreaks of social conflict and inflames the phenomenon of people fleeing the country for urban areas and unemployment.
- ✗ It increases the land area dedicated to cultivating cereals for animal feed and biofuels, which worsens the tragedy of famine and malnutrition.

Denounce land grabbing!



Land Grabbing



Land and water are the essence of life...

They are not pawns on the chessboard of a globalized economy

Land Grabbing: What are we talking about?

- ✗ The expression 'land grabbing' came into use recently to refer to the buying and leasing of large areas of land (thousands or millions of hectares), particularly in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe, to foreign public and private interests.
- ✗ These dealings primarily concern arable land, but to a lesser degree also involve mineral, forest and aquatic resources.
- ✗ The land grabbing phenomenon has been characterized by a very rapid acceleration, in particular following the financial and food crises in 2008, and by inadequate transparency. The occasional newspaper article and just a few researchers are revealing what is happening but the majority of contracts remain secret.

Why is it so widespread?

- ✗ Because various countries – including the Gulf countries, China, South Korea, India and Japan - are trying to resolve their problems of a scarcity of agricultural land by buying or leasing land for cultivation outside of their boundaries. The majority of this land is used for monoculture cultivation of cereals, sometimes genetically modified, with the produce nearly all exported rather than sold on the local market.
- ✗ Because some rich countries consider it as a possible solution to the energy crisis: In this case the land is used for cultivation of bio-fuels, which are also destined for export.
- ✗ Because following the 2008 financial crisis, land became an increasingly attractive investment and speculation, with requests set to increase in the future.

Who are the protagonists?

- ✗ Investors include both public bodies - governments who work with and support private business, sovereign funds - and private bodies such as multinationals, banks and pension funds.
- ✗ The rapid spread of the phenomenon has been assisted by the ambiguous role of the World Bank, which on the one hand expresses its preoccupation regarding the situation and on the other hand backs foreign public and private investors, and assists the 'hosting' governments to modify their legislation and the political situation to facilitate the transfer of vast holdings of land.
- ✗ It is also thanks to the shortsightedness of governments and, at times, to corruption, that land is being yielded so easily.
- ✗ The farmers living on the land subject to these negotiations are nearly always in a position of great vulnerability. Above all, because across vast areas of the world, particularly in Africa, access to agricultural land is based upon traditional practices and customs that usually aren't written down or recognized by national laws. Furthermore, in the rarer cases when farmers have a formal property title, negotiations and dealings are extremely unbalanced.

In just a few years this phenomenon has reached a dramatic scale: Dealings that have been concluded or are currently in progress involve around **50 million hectares** – a land mass equal to the size of Spain.