



Illustrations created by Anna Loveday-Brown

## Editorial - Land Grabbing

*"How firm we stand and plant our feet upon our land determines the strength of our children's heartbeats."*  
Poolly Koutchak, Unalakleet, Alaska

This April the World Bank is organizing again its annual conference *on land and poverty*. It is a big event gathering international bureaucracy, government representatives, mainstream academics, few big NGOs and the private sector. Under the title *Land governance in a rapidly changing environment* they will discuss, among other issues, how to deal with the governance challenges raised by large agricultural investments. In plain language, **how to continue the appropriation of peoples' lands and waters by private investors while pretending to help the poor**. Also in April the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will hold a consultation process about the best use of natural resources for boosting living standards in developing countries. The IMF seeks to reassess its policy advice on the use of natural resources in development due to the growing importance of natural resources in many economies. Despite disastrous consequences, the International Financial Institutions (IFI) continue exercising a de facto ruling role in the international governance of land and natural resources. **This role is profoundly illegitimate**. A small group of rich countries defending the particular interests of business and finance together with their technocrats think they can decide over our lands and territories.

**But this ruling role started to be challenged:** Last 9 of March, the *Committee on World Food Security (CFS)* completed the intergovernmental negotiations of the *FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Tenure of Land Fisheries and Forests* in the context of National Food Security. With the successful completion of these negotiations after a participatory process lasting nearly three years, the CFS has shown that it has the capacity to convene multilateral negotiations with broad social participation to discuss and propose solutions to one of the most pressing problems of our time. The *Guidelines* contain valuable points that will provide backing to organisations in their struggle to ensure the care and use of natural resources in order to produce more nourishing food, so helping to eliminate hunger by addressing its root causes. The CFS is a new international space with more democratic rules that allows people's organisations to challenge the IFI's recipes and ruling. **This is a first step to democratize the decision making processes related to food and agriculture at the international level.**

**April is also the month of the international peasant struggle.** La Via Campesina has called on all of its members and allies, fisher-folk movements, agricultural workers organisations, environmental groups, women organisations and social justice movements to display *massive popular resistance to land grabbing, to corporate control over land and natural resources and to defend small-scale, family based agriculture and food production as the most socially, economically and environmentally sustainable model of using resources and ensuring the right to food for all. Let's take action!*

Sofia Monsalve  
FIAN International



**17 April**  
International Day of Peasant Struggle

**22 April**  
International Mother Earth Day

**23 - 26 April**  
Annual World Bank conference on land and poverty - Take action against the World Bank hypocrisy and its seven principles of Responsible Agricultural Investment!

**20 - 22 June**  
Earth Summit Rio+20 - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Road to Rio a countdown-map of key events [http://www.etcgroup.org/upload/ETC\\_rio20\\_maplist\\_v8\\_4web.pdf](http://www.etcgroup.org/upload/ETC_rio20_maplist_v8_4web.pdf)

**Subscribe online now!**  
[www.nyeleni.org](http://www.nyeleni.org)

Help us to build the Food Sovereignty movement from the grassroots.

**Every contribution counts:  
Support the Nyéléni newsletter.**

Bank: BANCA POPOLARE ETICA SCARL  
Account holder: Asociación Lurbide -  
El Camino de la Tierra  
IBAN: IT76 J050 1812 1010 0000 0134 009  
BIC/SWIFT code: CCRTIT2T84A

## Dakar Appeal against the land grab

**We all have the duty to resist land grabbing and to support the communities fighting for their dignity!**

During the *World Social Forum in Dakar*, Senegal, in February 2011, social movements, organisations of small food producers and other civil society organisations released a collective appeal against land grabbing. Over 870 organisations have already signed.

**Let's stop the land grab, read and sign the petition here:**  
<http://www.dakarappeal.org/index.php/en/>

## Who we are

In the last years hundreds of organizations and movements have been engaged in struggles to defend and promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty. Many of these organizations were present in the Nyéléni Forum 2007 and feel part of a broader Food Sovereignty Movement. **The Nyéléni Newsletter wants to be the voice of this international movement.**

Organizations involved: Development Fund, ETC, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Food First, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for food sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Oxfam Solidarity, Real World Radio, Roppa, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, Veterinarios Sin Fronteras.

**Now is the time for Food Sovereignty!**

## Land to the tillers!

April 17 is the *International Day of Peasant Struggle*, commemorating the massacre of 19 peasants struggling for land and justice in Brazil in 1996. Every year on that day actions take place around the world in defence of small-scale farmers struggling for their rights.

In recent years, we have suffered from the implementation of new policies and of a new development model based on land expansion and land expropriation, commonly known as land grabbing. Land grabbing has resulted in the concentration of the ownership of land and natural resources in the hands of large-scale investors, plantation owners, logging, hydro-power and mining companies, tourism and real estates developers, port and infrastructures authorities, and so forth. *This has led to the eviction and displacement of the local populations - usually farmers -, the violation of human rights and women rights, increased poverty, social fracture and environmental pollution.*

Therefore La Via Campesina calls on all of its members and allies, fisher-folk movements, agricultural workers organisations, students and environmental groups, women organisations and social justice movements to organise actions around the world on April 17 in order to display massive popular resistance to land grabbing and highlight the struggle against corporate control over land and natural resources.

### Let's unite and fight:

- To stop land grabbing and reclaim grabbed land – the land should be in the hands of tillers;
- To implement genuine agrarian reform in order to bring about social justice in rural areas;
- To end the control over billions of people's lives exercised by a few investors and transnational companies;
- To oppose the principles of "responsible agricultural investment" (RAI) proposed by the World Bank as it can never be "responsible" for investors and corporations to grab farmers' land;
- To strengthen the agriculture production model based on family farming and food sovereignty.

**See what you and your organisation can do:**  
[http://www.viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1212:call-for-april-17-international-day-of-peasant-struggle&catid=26:17-april-day-of-peasants-struggle&Itemid=33](http://www.viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1212:call-for-april-17-international-day-of-peasant-struggle&catid=26:17-april-day-of-peasants-struggle&Itemid=33)

### Actions planned for 17 April by the small-scale farmers' Alliance against land-grabbing

There was a unanimous agreement at the *International farmers' conference to stop land grabbing* in Mali that small-scale farmers must be the driving force behind the *Global Alliance against land grabbing*. In this way the Alliance will be comprised of farmers' organisations and local small-scale farmers' groups who are directly involved in this struggle. *NGOs and other organisations are invited to show their support* by signing the Dakar Appeal and, depending on their capacity, provide physical, moral, material and/or financial support to the actions and strategies which respond to the concerns and projects of small-scale farmers' communities and organisations involved in the hands on struggle. They can also help to make the fight visible and create, for example, a link from their website to the Alliance's blog: [www.stopauxaccaparementsdes terres.over-blog.com](http://www.stopauxaccaparementsdes terres.over-blog.com)

## Pension funds buying up farmland

**Many kinds of businesses** are joining the rush to get control over, or a financial stake in, farmland around the world today: US agribusiness firms, Asian sovereign wealth funds, European development banks, African private equity groups, etc.<sup>1</sup> Among the institutional investors - companies that manage other people's money - **pension funds are the single biggest group buying into global farmland**. In 2011, pension funds were holding US\$30 trillion in assets - three times more than the world's sovereign wealth funds, private equity funds and hedge funds put together!<sup>2</sup> About US\$15-20 billion of that was tied up in farmland acquisitions, from Brazil to West Africa. Farmland is a new source of profit for these firms because of the food crisis (high prices), financial crisis (need for safe haven) and climate crisis (soil and water supplies under strain). They are now hungry for farmland to tap three possible revenue streams: buy the land and flip it (resell it for a higher price); rent it back to producers; take a share of the farm's produce sales, usually on the global export market. Pension funds say they may double their exposure to global farmland over the next 3-5 years.

Various people's organisations and movements feel that the global campaign to stop land grabbing should go after pension funds with some urgency. Not just because they are big, **but because it's our money**. Pension funds are grabbing land with workers' retirement savings. Recently, a number of Europe-based groups started working together on this. They will document and begin political action to get European pension funds out of farmland investment and food speculation.<sup>3</sup> Pensions need to be protected, but not by investing in corporate controlled factory farms. **We need to encourage useful social investment in small farmers, local markets and food sovereignty instead.**

1 - In February 2012, GRAIN released a new listing of over 400 land grab cases in the food sector worldwide. It itemises who is getting land where, for how much money and for what purpose. See <http://www.grain.org/e/4479>.  
2 - See GRAIN, "Pension funds: Key players in the global farmland grab", June 2011, <http://www.grain.org/e/4287>.  
3 - Contact <daniel.pentzlin@foeeurope.org>.

## Farmers' conference: Stop land-grabbing now!

In November 2011, more than 250 farmers from thirty different countries participated into the first *International farmers' conference to stop land grabbing* in Sélingué, Mali. At the close of the conference, the participants launched a *Global Alliance against Land-Grabbing (check box 2)* led by peasants in collaboration with a wide range of social movements and organisations. The event was organised by the Malian national confederation of peasant organisations (CNOP) and by La Via Campesina in response to the *Dakar appeal* against the land grab and in defence of food sovereignty, of the commons and of the rights of small scale food providers to natural resources. In the conference declaration the participants commit to resist land-grabbing by all means possible, to support all those who fight land-grabs, and to put pressure on national governments and international institutions to fulfil their obligations to ensure and uphold the rights of peoples. *Specifically, we commit to:*

- Organise rural and urban communities against land-grabs in every form;
- Strengthen the capacities of our communities and movements to reclaim and defend our rights, lands and resources;
- Win and secure the rights of women in our communities to land and natural resources;
- Create public awareness about how land grabbing is creating crises for all society;
- Build alliances across different sectors, constituencies, regions, and mobilise our societies to stop land-grabbing;
- Strengthen our movements to achieve food sovereignty and genuine agrarian reform.

### Read the conference declaration and be part of the global alliance

[http://www.viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1154:stop-land-grabbing-now&catid=23:agrarian-reform&Itemid=36](http://www.viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1154:stop-land-grabbing-now&catid=23:agrarian-reform&Itemid=36)

**Globalize the struggle, globalize hope!**

## In defence of Food Sovereignty: Stop the water grab!

On March 14 - 17, more than four thousand people from 90 countries gathered in Mar-seilles, France to participate in the *Alternative World Water Forum (FAME)*. The *People's World Water Forum* challenged the commercial *World Water Forum*, which was convened by the corporate think-tank World Water Council (WWC). But more than challenging and exposing the illegitimacy and privatization agenda of the WWC, the water justice movements proposed a new vision and culture of water as well as concrete alternatives to privatization and commodification. The message from the FAME is clear: **defend, reclaim and redefine public water!** FAME was also a fertile ground for the gathering and convergence of several movements— the anti-dam, peasant, climate justice, women, anti-extractive industries, etc. from South and North. Various issues were discussed including the right to water, green economy, Rio+20, women and water, and the future of water movements. Declarations and material at [www.fame2012.org](http://www.fame2012.org)

### To read, listen, watch and share

- Follow news and reports on *land grabbing* in the web page [www.farmlandgrab.org](http://www.farmlandgrab.org)
- Read the analysis of the *FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Tenure of Land Fisheries and Forests at the beginning of May* in the web page of the CSM [http://www.csm4cfs.org/policy\\_working\\_groups-6/land\\_tenure-6/](http://www.csm4cfs.org/policy_working_groups-6/land_tenure-6/)
- *Land Grabs leave Africa thirsty*, Oakland and Polaris Institute, December 2011 [http://www.polarisinstitute.org/files/OI\\_brief\\_land\\_grabs\\_leave\\_africa\\_thirsty\\_1.pdf](http://www.polarisinstitute.org/files/OI_brief_land_grabs_leave_africa_thirsty_1.pdf)
- *Debating the global land grab*, TNI, <http://www.tni.org/article/debating-global-land-grab>
- *Fracking and water*, <http://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/article22812.html?lang=en>

