



Damien Glez for Afronline

## Editorial

### Fair winds for the Nyéléni newsletter!

Following the International Forum on Food Sovereignty held in Mali in February 2007, the social movements that brought this initiative to life have decided to create a tool for communication and exchange in order to continue the fight for food sovereignty and to defend the interests of disadvantaged groups such as small-scale farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples and pastoralists. The situation of these groups continues to deteriorate due to the ongoing assaults of an increasingly inhuman capitalism. A new wave of land-grabbing can now be added to the problems of our times, a reality which the World Bank seeks to legitimize in its latest report. It is therefore urgent and critical for social movements to regroup and to strengthen our alliances in order to deal with the neoliberal offensives, unprecedented in the history of mankind.

This newsletter aims to bring a small stone to the edifice of resistance that will be built to counteract transnational corporations, the World Bank and their allies. We urge all organizations and all movements committed to the struggle for food sovereignty to embark with us on this great journey.

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National Coordination of Peasants' Organizations of Mali  
Member of the International Coordinating Committee of Via Campesina

## Be active!

### 11-14 October

36th Session of the Committee for World Food Security (CFS)-FAO + CSO parallel meeting – Rome, Italy

### 16 October

World Food Day and day of struggle against Monsanto and other TNCs

### 18-29 October

Convention on Biological Diversity, Conference of parties – Nagoya, Japan

### 9-10 November

Global Aginvesting Europe – Geneva, Switzerland

### 11-12 November

G20 meeting - Seoul, South Korea

### 29 Nov-10 Dec

COP 16 - Cancun, Mexico

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[www.nyeleni.org](http://www.nyeleni.org)

## Who we are

In the last years hundreds of organizations and movements have been engaged in struggles, activities, and various kinds of work to defend and *promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty* around the world. Many of these organizations were present in the *Nyéleni Forum 2007* and feel part of a broader *Food Sovereignty Movement*, that considers the *Nyéleni 2007* declaration as its political platform. **The Nyéleni Newsletter wants to be the voice of this international movement.**

Organizations involved: Development Fund, ETC, 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!

# In the spotlight

**The land grabbers** include China, India, Japan, Malaysia and South Korea in Asia; Egypt and Libya in Africa; Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the Middle East; and UK in Europe.

Examples of **private investors** are Louis Dreyfus, Deutsche Bank, Mitsubishi, Daewoo, Hyundai, Americana Group, Agrowill, Al Rabie, Foras, AgriSA, Alpcot Agro, CP Group, Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, Schroders, Barclays, Lord Jacob Rothschild, George Soros.\*

**Governments selling off their land** include the Philippines, Mozambique, Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Laos, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sudan, Uganda, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan and Zimbabwe.\*

**More than US\$100 billion** have already been mobilised for these deals (in the forms of specialised funds, investment packages, etc).\*

## How much land is involved?

A new report from the Global Land Project says that the land involved could be as much as between 51 and 63 million hectares in Africa alone! Exactly the size of France!\*

## More than just Land – Territory

For indigenous peoples land is not merely a productive resource, it is much more than that. It is the basis for indigenous peoples' social organization, economic system and cultural identifications. Indigenous peoples view land as part of a *wider territory* or ancestral domain. The concept of territory or domain includes not only the productive function of land, but also the natural environment, water, forests, subsurface minerals, the air above, and other productive resources.

The definition is from *Agrarian Reform in the Context of Food Sovereignty, the Right to Food and Cultural Diversity: Land, Territory and Dignity*, 2006  
<http://www.landaction.org/display.php?article=400>

## A renewed threat to food sovereignty: land-grabbing

All around the world **small food producers** have been struggling for the **right to produce food for themselves and their communities**; and everywhere this right is jeopardized by free market policies imposed for years by WTO and IFIs which force them to grow crops for export or allow products to be dumped in their national markets at very low prices. For many years small farmers have confronted the **concentration of land ownership** and have **demanding agrarian reform**. For their part, governments are trying to **criminalize** the movements engaged in direct reclamation of lands as part of their struggle and instead of listening to these calls for agrarian reform and food sovereignty, are collaborating with **private interests** to move in the opposite direction.

## Governments and private companies are stealing land!

Over the last ten years foreign **governments and private firms** have been **increasingly investing and acquiring large surfaces of fertile land** in other countries – especially in Africa and Asia - but also in Latin America and in Eastern Europe, for the purpose of agricultural production and export. The food crisis and the global financial crisis have caused this alarming phenomenon to **intensify in the last couple of years**. On one hand there are **countries** who want to secure food for their population in the long term, such as China, Japan, Malaysia, Korea, United Arab Emirates (\*). They are grabbing land to produce food crops for export at cheap prices. Often this acts as a way to re-structure or "outsource" a country's food production. For example in Korea it is better "business" to grow cheap food in Cambodia and import it than to produce food directly in the country. On the other hand there are the **private investors**, big corporations and joint ventures – including governments - who consider land as a new source of safe financial investment. Many of them are grabbing land to produce large monocultures for agrofuel markets or for carbon trading offsets. These **controversial agreements** on land have been taking place in **secret** and almost always there has been **no proper consultation with local communities** (\*\*).

## The long-awaited report of the World Bank backs land-grabbing!

On September 8 the World Bank finally released its report on land-grabbing. In 2009 the Institution committed to publish a **complete report** on this worrying phenomenon. However even the World Bank, which works closely with governments and big business found it **difficult to get access to detailed information**. The report actually denounces the **lack of transparency** in the majority of these agreements, shows how many times these transactions put in **danger the rights of local communities**, and highlight the importance of small-scale farmers. Even so, instead of condemning this attack on **people's sovereignty** – the Bank still thinks that land-grabbing and large-scale farming can offer a win-win situation. Small food producers have been feeding the world for centuries and various studies demonstrate that smaller farms produce far more per acre/hectare than larger ones (\*\*\*). Instead the Bank seems to justify land-grabbing with the need to **increase land's productivity** using **unsustainable** agribusiness models. This is why, together with the FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) the Bank published a **set of principles for "socially responsible" land grabs** (RAI) in January 2010. The seven principles are constructed to look reasonable and persuasive, even though they are not. Transferring lands from local communities to corporations to produce industrial monoculture crops for export **will never create a favourable situation for communities or for food sovereignty**.

## The FAO's initiative to regulate natural resource tenure

In this context of land-grabbing and food crisis **access to land and natural resources has become more of a concern than ever**. The FAO's current initiative to develop *Voluntary Guidelines for Land and Natural Resource Tenure* would provide a framework that States can use when formulating their own strategies, policies and legislation. The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) and FIAN are supporting the participation of Civil Society to the FAO process and they are organizing specific consultations with women, indigenous and tribal peoples, fisherfolk, peasants and landless, forest communities, pastoralists and urban poor. The final document will be available in October 2010; but in order for these guidelines to be acceptable, **they need to be binding** for all countries. Civil society movements are also calling for a change in the current approach to land and natural resources; they say there is a need to recognize **collective rights to natural resources and territories** in the current legal framework (\*\*\*\*).

In 2006 the FAO organized the *International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development* (ICARRD). The FAO's current initiative is the follow up of this conference. **The final declaration** of the meeting, signed by 92 governments, **recognized elements of the peasants' struggle for food sovereignty**, including; the need to support traditional and family farming; to redistribute land and other agrarian resources; the need to implement fairer and people-centred agricultural policies; the importance of local and national markets and the role of peasants' organizations in defining agricultural policies ([www.icarrd.org](http://www.icarrd.org)). The FAO and the other international institutions **should take into account the results of the Conference and question all policies that move in the opposite direction**, such as this new wave of land-grabbing. All around the world social movements and civil society are resisting and denouncing land grabbing!

(\*) GRAIN, (\*\*) FIAN, (\*\*\*) *The inverse relationship between farm size and output*, (\*\*\*\*) IPC, to know more please check the section **To read, watch, listen and share**.

### **A large group of Civil Society Organizations wrote an international call to Stop Land Grabbing now!**

Read and circulate it at <http://farmlandgrab.org/12200>

**Land grabbing is a violation** of economic, social and cultural rights. It 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. Access to land for the small-scale producers **is the path out of poverty** in rural areas where hunger is endemic in many parts of the world. Land grabbing will accelerate ecosystem 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.

### **Call to action: Ban Land Grabbing!**

The agenda of the upcoming session of the **Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on 11-14 October 2010 includes a policy roundtable on land tenure and international agriculture investment, that will discuss:** the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on land tenure and the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment (RAI) promoted by the World Bank. It is an occasion to see if the reformed CFS can effectively deliver international policy responses to one of the most pressing issues of our times!

**Send a letter to the ministry in your country representing your government in FAO (usually the ministry of agriculture) with a copy to the ambassador of your country in FAO requesting them to ban land grabbing.**

<http://www.fian.org/news/news/ban-land-grabbing-call-to-action>

## **Land reform in few steps**

**1950-1960 State-led land reform** - After the World War II many countries carried out land reforms. Some of them were successful as in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, China and Cuba. Others were big failures, generally when 'reforms' gave only poor quality land to poor families and failed to support them with favourable policies.

**1980- 1990 World Bank-led market-based land reforms** - Since the 1980s the World Bank has taken the lead in promoting comprehensive land reform; including for example the promotion of policies to title lands; the facilitation of land markets and the support of 'land bank' credit for land purchases by the poor. These market-based interventions do not bring real solutions and in many cases cause new land loss and conflicts.

**1990 - present Agrarian Reform from the people** - Landless movements are bringing land reform to national and international policy debates. In spite of being constantly criminalized by the governments, these movements are growing rapidly around the world, from Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Honduras and Nicaragua, to South Africa, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Thailand, India and countless other countries.

During the World Food Summit in 1996, **La Via Campesina** brought into the public debate the concept of **Food Sovereignty**, promoting an alternative to neoliberal policies ([www.via-campesina.org](http://www.via-campesina.org)). Since then, this concept has become a major issue in international agricultural debates. **Food Sovereignty** can only be achieved through **redistributive agrarian reforms!**

The information is extracted from <http://www.landaction.org/display.php?article=422>

## **Voices from the field**

### **Evictions are pushing small food producers off their territories**

Last year, the Malian government sold off 100.000 hectares (ha) of its people's land to the Libyan company MALIBYA. Libya is **grabbing land to guarantee its own food security**. In the same region, another 100.000 ha of land belongs to the TOMOTA group. This private group grows **jatropha** for the **agrofuel market**. Because of these agreements, many **farmers have been evicted from their land**.

Antoinette Dembélé is one of them, to read more <http://farmlandgrab.org/7483>

### **Nomadic people struggle for their survival and the survival of their way of life**

Taghi Farvar is a nomad from the Shahsevans tribe of Iran, and he is the secretary general of the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP). During the Regional Consultation to Europe, Central and West Asia on the FAO *Voluntary Guidelines on the Tenure of Land and Natural Resources*, he was interviewed by Real World Radio. Farvar strongly defended the importance of natural resources and land: "The conservation of nature and natural resources is **essential** for the nomad peoples of the world, because in this way **they protect their own way of life**."

Nomad people are characterized by their mobility(...). Often other peoples turn up and they think, « This land is abandoned, let's occupy it. » (...) Governments, private companies or the military arrive and devour the land of the nomads. **Transnational corporations** are probably **one of the worst plagues for us**, because they want to take more and more land, and the nomads lose their livelihoods because the land is part of their territory. **The concept of territory is very important for all the indigenous peoples**, but especially for the mobile peoples, because they have customary rights over lands, **but other actors do not recognize that right!** On the issue of land-grabbing he concluded: **"Many governments grab lands, (...) they take it from the people without any compensation and without any previous agreement, and they give it to transnational corporations or to others, who want to invest in land, as for example growing agrofuels."** But he concluded: **"In my country, in Iran, we still have 700 nomadic tribes, who practice seasonal migration of livestock. They are creating organizations to defend themselves and their rights!"**

To know more or listen the full interview in Spanish <http://www.wamip.org/> and <http://www.radiomundoreal.fm/Vivir-la-sustentabilidad>

## The world in words

### At the Americas Social Forum, social movements fight for real change!

10 thousands activists gathered in Asunción in Paraguay to take part in the *IV Americas Social Forum*, from the 11 to the 15 of August. The Forum called on social movements to strengthen the struggle for **people's sovereignty**: food sovereignty, sovereignty over energy and natural resources and women's sovereignty over their lives. The social and indigenous movements are demanding that governments keep all promises made to their peoples. In Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador - and in Brazil and Argentina - the peoples are encouraging their leaders to distance themselves from the neo-liberal system and concretely speed up the process towards a new egalitarian and sustainable model.

For more info <http://www.forosocialamericas.org/>

To read the final declaration  
<http://www.cadtm.org/Social-Movements-Assembly>

### Making salt at the US Social Forum in Detroit

Over a half-century ago, Mahatma Gandhi led a multitude of Indians to the sea **to make salt**—in defiance of the British Empire's monopoly on this resource so important to the people's diet. The action was the beginning of the end for Britain's rule over India. At the US Social Forum, which took place in Detroit from the 22 to the 26 of June, the US food movement declared to be ready to "make salt"! A better food system needs to **seek food sovereignty from the monopolies that dominate the food systems** with the complicity of governments. In particular the struggle for food sovereignty in the United States is inextricably **linked to the struggle for workers' rights, immigrant's rights, women's rights, the fight to dismantle racism** in communities, and the struggle for **sovereignty of indigenous communities**. In order to create a better food system, corporate control of seeds, land, water and natural resources must be broken up.

For more info <http://www.foodfirst.org/en/node/3001>

### The long struggle of European dairy producers!

**Thousand of milk producers from many European countries** demonstrated in Brussels during a session of the European Council of Agriculture Ministers on the 12th of July. **Since mid-2008, the dairy market has been dramatically deteriorating**; the decision of the European Union in 2003 to remove the quotas for milk production by 2015 and the parallel drop in the milk price are negatively affecting dairy producers' income. **The situation has caused massive protests**. Dairy producers are struggling for fair prices, public supply management and for the end of EU dumping...

For more info on the milk demonstration  
<http://www.eurovia.org/spip.php?article342&lang=en>

### Farmers resist land-grabbing in Uttar Pradesh

A massive *Kisan Panchayat* (Farmers Meeting) led by BKU (Bhartiya Kisan Union) was held in Tappal village (near Aligarh) in Uttar Pradesh on August 20. This was the culmination of the ongoing farmers protests in the region over unfair land acquisition by the government for Jaypee industries. The land will be used to build the Yamuna Expressway as well as for the construction of a township and other private real estate development. The main and urgent demand of the farmers is to increase the rate of compensation. More than 15,000 farmers attended the panchayat and others arrived from across the country.

Farm land grabbing is a major problem in India with an ongoing wave of land acquisitions for development projects.

To keep updated on the situation  
<http://lvcsouthasia.blogspot.com/>

**Next edition on Climate Change!**  
**Send your contributions**  
**News stories, photos, interviews to [info@nyeleni.org](mailto:info@nyeleni.org)**  
**by the 10th of October!**

## To read, listen, watch and share

- To keep updated on land-grabbing, check the blog <http://farmlandgrab.org/>
- For more info on land matters check the *Land Research Action Network* website at <http://www.landaction.org/spip/?lang=en>
- To listen to full coverage of the *CSO Regional Consultation for Europe, Central and West Asia on FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Land and Natural Resource Tenure. July 7-9, 2010, Rome, Italy* check <http://www.radiomundoreal.fm/Consulta-Regional-de-OSC-para-la>
- To participate in the call to action *Ban land-grabbing!* <http://www.fian.org/news/news/ban-land-grabbing-call-to-action>
- For reports and more references [www.nyeleni.org](http://www.nyeleni.org)

***One does not sell the earth upon which the people walk.***  
**Tashunka Witko, 1840–1877**