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CIVIL SOCIETY ASKS 3 CRITICAL QUESTIONS OF THE WORLD BANK AT ITS 2015 SPRING MEETINGS

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Oakland, CA - As the World Bank prepares for its annual Spring Meetings, members of [Our Land Our Business](http://ourlandourbusiness.org), a campaign of over 260 NGOs, farmer groups and trade unions from around the world, are publically posing three questions about the Bank's role in land grabbing, climate destruction and the corporatization of agriculture.

These questions penetrate to the heart of the World Bank's development model and throw its loudly and expensively self-promoted claim to serve the interests of the world's poor into stark relief.

1. Why have you not spoken to farmers before promoting massive agriculture-reform programs?

Your flagship agricultural reform initiative – [“Enabling the Business of Agriculture”](#) (EBA), formerly known as “Benchmarking the Business of Agriculture” (BBA) – is due to be rolled out [across 40 countries this year](#). At no point in your decision to create the EBA have you consulted farmers or farmer groups. Your consultation has been [limited to rich governments and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, who fund you](#). The only open consultation that could have given affected communities an opportunity to be heard was at a meeting that you staged in London in November 2014, to which you gave [seven days](#)

[notice](#) for attendance. This sort of sham-consultation would seem to be in direct opposition to your own stated goals to consult affected communities, and makes a mockery of [President Kim's recent mea culpa](#) on how the Bank has failed to take into account communities' needs in the past.

2. Why are you rewarding countries that cede their power and wealth to foreign corporations, while punishing those who spend on the health and wellbeing of their populations?

The EBA is a sister-initiative to the [Doing Business Rankings](#). These rankings, judged annually by technocrats in Washington DC, influence massive amounts of revenue, from the Bank itself, donor governments and corporations. Over the past seven years, in response to the Doing Business ranking, twenty-one Sub Saharan African countries decreased corporate income tax rates at least once. In some countries, they have been reduced [as many as three times](#). At the same time, you rewarded countries like [Chad](#), [DRC](#), and [Mali](#) with higher rankings for reducing property transfer taxes and regulations on land acquisition, and downgraded eleven African countries for establishing or increasing social contribution taxes that can be used to improve social services.

3. Why are you prioritizing farming models that destroy the environment and impoverish people, over those that work in harmony with the environment and are already feeding the world?

Using the discredited claim that only by using commercial, patented seeds and synthetic fertilizers and pesticides can we hope to feed the world in the future, you have centralized the role of large multi-national corporations and their financial backers (e.g. the Gates Foundation, which holds [\\$23 million shares in Monsanto](#), and [\\$1.4 billion of shares in fossil fuel companies](#)) in your model for global agriculture. Rather than speak to and support the family farmers who are already [producing 70% of the world's food](#), or look to the library of evidence that shows the benefits and potential of [regenerative farming methods](#), you seem to be taking direction from the mega-rich and corporate monopolies. Agroecology not only increases crop yield over time, it does so in ways that sustain the health of the soil and sequester large amounts of carbon. Synthetic methods on the other hand plateau and then decrease yield, and actively degrade soil and produce greenhouse gasses in enormous quantities.

The *Our Land Our Business* campaign demands a response from the Bank to these questions, and an end to the World Bank's [business indicators that contribute to land grabs](#), dispossession of the world's poorest, and in many cases most productive farmers.

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For more information, please visit *Our Land Our Business'* website at ourlandourbusiness.org and consult the Oakland Institute's new policy brief on the World Bank's [Enabling the Business of Agriculture](#).