JOINT STATEMENT

Stop Enabling Land Grabs: Agriculture Doesn’t Need World Bank’s Business Indicators.

As a promoter and financer of large-scale land investments in agriculture, the World Bank Group has been a key driver of land grabbing in the developing world. It is a central player in the industrial development system that is using its financial and political might, through its investment agencies and institutions, to force developing countries to follow a pre-prescribed model of development, based on the neoliberal principles of privatization, deregulation, low corporate taxation and ‘free market’ fundamentalism. This model is designed to extract the maximum value from developing countries' natural and human resources and centralize wealth and power in an already tiny but bloated corporate and elite minority.

Since 2002, the World Bank has promoted this model through the Doing Business rankings which score countries according to how well Washington bureaucrats think they are improving the “ease of doing business.” According to Bank’s own statements, these annual rankings are closely followed by foreign investors; they are used by the World Bank and bilateral donors to guide their funding.

The Doing Business ranking is today’s version of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that devastated the livelihoods of millions through the withdrawal of state intervention and the forced liberalization of national economies in the 1980s and 1990s.

The ranking has already greatly impacted agricultural sectors at the expense of well-established smallholders by favoring foreign ‘investors’ who seek quick profits through the violations of peoples' land rights, the extraction of natural resources and the exploitation of cheap labor.

Though it is widely recognized today that land grabs are dispossessing and impoverishing rural communities across the globe, the World Bank is unwilling to change its approach. On the contrary, it is working to do more to favor investments by foreign corporations in developing countries’ agricultural sectors.

At the demand of the G8 in 2012, and with funding from the Gates Foundation, the UK, US, Dutch and Danish governments, the World Bank is now developing a new instrument for benchmarking the business of agriculture (BBA). Started in late 2013, pilot studies are now underway in 10 countries, to be scaled up to 40 countries in 2014. The BBA is expected to benchmark and rank eighty to a hundred countries by 2015. The BBA builds on the Doing Business model and adapts it to agriculture. With this new instrument, the World Bank advocates for instance for the free circulation of commercial seeds, fertilizers, and access to “secure property rights” through land reform. Despite a language that claims concerns for small-farmers, the goal of this new agriculture-focused ranking system is far too clear: further open up countries’ agricultural sectors to foreign corporations.

Doing Business Fosters Land Grabs Around the World

The Doing Business gives points to countries when they act in favor of the “ease of doing business”. This consists in smoothing the way for corporations’ activity in the country by, for
instance, cutting administrative procedures, lowering corporate taxes, removing environmental and social regulations or suppressing trade barriers. With the ranking, the World Bank also encourages land reforms that tend to make land a marketable commodity, easily accessible to wealthy corporations. Considering that public regulations are obstacles to enterprises' thriving, the Doing Business neglects issues such as human rights, right to food, economic and social rights, the protection of workers, and the sustainable use of natural resources.

There is abundant evidence of how the Doing Business ranking has favored land grabbing. For example, Liberia implemented 39 reforms to ease business between 2008 and 2011 and as a result attracted growing flows of FDIs. Among the investors were palm oil and rubber giants: the British Equatorial Palm Oil, Malaysian Sime Darby, and Indonesian Golden Agri-Resources, who have acquired more than 1.5 million acres (607,000 hectares) in just a few years, taking away farms, resources and livelihoods from thousands of local people.

In Sierra Leone, the World Bank guided a series of reforms with aim of attracting FDI. FDI went from an average of $18 million per year between 2000 and 2005 to $740 million in 2012 alone. Reforms around land registration and fast-tracking land leasing processes have attracted sugar cane and oil palm planters including Addax Bioenergy from Switzerland, Quifel Natural Resources from Portugal, CAPARO from UK or SOFCIN from Luxembourg. In 2011 Sierra Leone had already leased 508,292 hectares to foreign investors. A 2014 deal with the palm oil grower Golden Veroleum could double this figure and bring to 20% the amount of Sierra Leone's arable land taken away from rural populations.

Hailed as one of the 2014 top ten reformers, the Philippines jumped up 40 spots in three years is. The year before, World Bank had advised reforms “for accelerating growth” in the country and creating of jobs in rural sector. Opening of Philippines’ agricultural sector to FDI made it the third most popular destination for foreign investment in land and led to total acquisition of 5.2 million hectares by foreigners in 2013.

World Bank’s yearly rankings are used by corporations and investors who want to know where to direct their capital. Additionally, the Doing Business results echo in WBG’s policies and budget allocation through the “investment climate” activities, and is used by bilateral donors for their financing. The Doing Business has thus huge financial implications and provokes a race to deregulation among governments willing to improve their ranking in order to attract money flows.

Worse, the Bank is now developing the Benchmarking the Business of Agriculture (BBA), which is expected to further accelerate the rush for agricultural land and natural resources such as water in developing countries.

The World Bank must come to reason in its agricultural strategy!
Smallholders farm 80 percent of the farmland and produce 80 percent of the food consumed in the developing world. Therefore, they are essential guarantors of food security, countries' food sovereignty, and constitute by far the first investors current and future and employers in developing countries' agricultural sector. It is their capacity to invest and develop their land that should be strengthened, and not the corporations. Smallholders' investments are hampered by tenure insecurity and lack of government support such as extension, financial and insurance services. Farmers' assets are particularly threatened by the current trend of land grabbing, which is fueled by World Bank’s business indicators and its advocacy for the opening of agricultural sectors, FDIs and land reforms.

It is time that the World Bank ceases to ignore that smallholders are the only future of an agriculture that can guarantee food security, ensure a sustainable use of natural resources and bring human development. We know far too well how damaging large-scale industrial
Farming is to the environment and the people. This model shall not be expanded to the developing world.

Food security, fair and equal development are achievable objectives if proper support is given to small farming. This starts with providing farmers with real tenure security, through providing secure access to common and agricultural lands rather than land reform, and through impeding that their assets be looted by foreign investors. The Bank doesn't understand this basic requirement and, through its powerful weapons Doing Business and Benchmarking the Business of Agriculture, continues to indiscriminately advocate for FDIs in the agricultural sector and to impose its one-size-fits all model of development where corporations reign supremely. This jeopardizes developing countries’ food security and sovereignty.

We therefore ask that World Bank’s Doing Business and Benchmarking the Business of Agriculture indicators be stopped.

If you want to add the name of your organization or require more information, please contact ourlandourbusiness@oaklandinstitute.org

SIGNATORIES
11.11.11- Coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement
AAF
Aboriginal Rights Coalition
Acció per un Turisme Responsable
Accion Colectiva Socioambiental
ACRF
Actionaid Bangladesh
Actionaid Sierra Leone
ACTNOW!
ADEA Colombia
Adivaani
Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network
Africa Faith and Justice Network
African Biodiversity Network
African Centre for Biodiversity
Alternatives
Amigos de la Tierra Argentina
Ardea Ecologistas en Acción Sierra de Ayllon
ASiA Assoc Salut i Agroecologia
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development
Asociacion Ambiente y Sociedad
Asociación Vecinal Puebla de la Sierra
Associacio Varietats Loclas Illes Balears
Association pour la Défense des Droits de l'Eau et de l'Assainissement (ADDEA)
Bangladesh Krishok Federation
Belgium
Bangladesh
Australia
Spain
Mexico
Belgium
Bangladesh
Sierra Leone
Papua New Guinea
Colombia
India
Belgium
USA
Kenya
South Africa
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Senegal
Bangladesh
Biofuelwatch
BIOSALON
Biowatch South Africa
Blue Planet Project
Both ENDS
Bread for all
Bretton Woods Project
British Tamils Forum
Caney Fork Headwaters Association
CASPANI
CATAPA
CCHRA
CDHR
CDR Carrion y Ucieza
Center for Environmental Education and Development
Central Sepik Rural Development Foundation
Centre National de Coopération au Développement, CNCD-11.11.11
Centre Tricontinental
Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos “Segundo Montes Mozo S.J.” (CSMM)
Centro Interdisciplinario de Investigación y Desarrollo Alternativo, U Yich Lu’um, A. C
Centro de Promoción y Educación Profesional Vasco de Quiorga
CEPA-SL
Cercle pour la Défense de l'Environnement
CICODEV Africa
Climate and Sustainable Development Network of Nigeria
Club Entre Nous Jeunes
Coalition pour la Souveraineté Alimentaire / Food Sovereignty Coalition
College of the Atlantic
Comité Nacional AIAF
Conseil Balear Produccio Agraria Ecologica
Constituyente Ciudadana Popular/Gto
Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes du Mali (CNOP Mali)
COPAGEN
Cornucopia Network/NJ/TN Chapter
Corporate Europe Observatory
Council of Canadians
Cumberland Countians for EcoJustice
Development Services Exchange
Solomon Islands
Earth in Brackets
USA
Echos du Capricorne
France
Acologistas en Acción
Spain
Ecologistas en Acción Palencia
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Ecoropa
Europe
Ekta Parishad
India
Enda Pronat
Senegal
Entraide et Fraternite
Belgium
Environmental Monitoring Group
South Africa
ETC Group
Canada
Fahamu
Senegal, Kenya
Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc.
USA
Federacion SETEM
Spain
FIAN Belgium
Belgium
FIAN Germany
Germany
FIAN International
International
Focus on the Global South
Thailand, India, Philippines
Food Empowerment Project
USA
Food Sovereignty Sussex
UK
Food Tank
USA
Forest Governance Programme of the Sustainable Development Institute
Liberia
Forest Peoples’ Programme
UK
Frente Regional Ciudadano en Defensa de la Soberanía
Mexico
Friends of the Earth International (74 member groups)
International
Friends of the Siberian Forests
Russia
GASA
Panama
Global Exchange
USA
Global Forest Coalition
International
Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
USA
Global Justice NOW
International
Global Justice Project/Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at the University of California-Berkeley
USA
GRAIN
International
Grassroots International
USA
Green Scenery
Sierra Leone
Habitat International Coalition
Egypt
Heinrich Boll Stiftung Abuja
Nigeria
Housing and Land Rights Network
Egypt
Huerta El Campichuelo
Spain
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Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility Of United Church of Christ USA
New Wind Finland
Nicaragua Center for Community Action (NICCA) USA
NU Sierra Leone
Oakland Institute USA
OFRANEH Honduras
Organisation Nigérienne pour la Défense des Droits des Couches Vulnérables (ONDDCV) Niger
Our Water Commons USA
Pacific Network On Globalization (PANG) Fiji
Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum Pakistan
Pan African Community Movement Africa
Partners for the Land & Agricultural Needs of Traditional Peoples (PLANT) USA
Passionists International International
People’s Coalition on Food Sovereignty - Africa Africa
Peopleriver UK
PICOT Sierra Leone
Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo (PIDHDD Regional) Latin America
Platform Aarde Boer Consument Netherlands
Polaris Institute Canada
Pomio Potongpaga Group Papua New Guinea
Popular Resistance USA
Presbyterian Church USA
PROSALUS Spain
Public Services International International
Puvidham rural development trust India
RACAP Sierra Leone
Red de Ambientalistas Comunitarios de El Salvador (RACDES) El Salvador
Red Mexicana de afectados por la Mineria (REMA) Mexico
RedNNA Peru
Renewable Energy and Rural Development Services Benin
Réseau de Développement de l'Agriculture Durable (REDAD) Benin
Responsible Investment at Harvard Coalition USA
Salvemos al Madidi Republic of Korea
Sambhav Social Service Organization India
SEARICE Philippines
Second Chance Foundation NYC USA
Servindi Peru
SiLNoRF Sierra Leone
Sira del Val Sarabia Spain
SLADE
Slow Food Burgos
Social Justice Connection / Connexion Justice Sociale
Sociedad española de Agricultura Ecológica / Sociedad Española de Agroecología (SEAE)
Society for International Development
Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE)
Solomon Islands Land Defence Alliance
SOS FAIM
Spire Utviklingsfondets Ungdom
Struggle to Economize Future Environment (SEFE)
Synagri Tunisie
Synergie Paysanne
Talking Drums
Terra Franca
Texas Drought Project
The Corner House
The Development Fund
THE MEAL, Un repas pour notre Avenir
The Rules
Third World Network
Timberwatch
Transnational Institute
Turubu Ecoforestry
Union Paysanne
UPHR
USS, Nilphamari
Walking on the South (WOTS)
Our Water Commons
WhyHunger
WoNES
Working Group Food Justice
World Family
World Rural Forum
Zimbabwe People’s Land Rights Movement

2 Snapshot Background Note on Access to Seed, Snapshot Background Note on Access to Fertilizers, Snapshot Background Note on Access to Secure Property Rights on Land, World Bank, 2014.

6 SLIEPA to facilitate $1.6b investment for Golden veroleum Palm Oil Production in Sierra Leone, http://awoko.org/2013/06/21/sierra-leone-sliepa-to-facilitate-1-6b-investment-for-golden-veroleum-palm-oil-production-in-sierra-leone/.


