

Land grabs, biofuel demand raise global food-security risk

By [Global Research](#)

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A new report says Europe's growing demand for biofuels increases the risk of conflict over land and impairs food security. The authors even warn of a potential global crisis.

The report, compiled by international environmental pressure group Friends of the Earth (FoE), says that the amount of land being taken in Africa to feed Europe's increasing demand for biofuels is "underestimated and out of control." An area of arable land the size of Denmark – around five million hectares – has been acquired by foreign companies to produce biofuels, mainly for the European market, the report says.

The FoE warns that even more land will be required for biofuels if the European Union is to reach its target of 10 percent of transport fuels from renewable sources by 2020.

Africans have protested unfair land deals

"Our research shows that Europe's demand for biofuels is a major driver of land grabbing in Africa," Adrian Bebb, food and agriculture campaigner for FoE Europe, told Deutsche Welle. "Local communities are facing increasing hunger and food insecurity just so Europe can fuel its cars."

The pressure on local communities, regional and national governments in the 11 African nations investigated in the report's research could lead to internal conflicts and potentially spread across borders as arable land, forests and natural vegetation are cleared for biofuel production.

Internal African unrest building over land rights

According to a controversial leaked World Bank report on land grabs – which it has so far refused to release publicly – local communities are being bypassed in consultations between land-acquiring companies and African governments, a situation which has already led to conflicts over land rights. The report, cited by FoE, claims that there have been protests in Tanzania, Madagascar and Ghana following land grabs by foreign companies.

Food shortages could lead to rioting, experts fear

"The expansion of biofuels on our continent is transforming forests and natural vegetation into fuel crops, taking away food-growing farmland from communities, and creating conflicts with local people over land ownership," said Mariann Bassey, food and agriculture coordinator for Environmental Rights Action/FoE Nigeria.

"The aim of the investments taking place at the moment is to satisfy the food or agrofuel needs of foreign governments; some Gulf States, Asian countries and also EU-countries, and in the case of private companies, the hope for lucrative gains by speculating with land or trading agricultural goods," Alexa Edmundts from MISEREOR, a German development organization affiliated with the International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity Alliance, told Deutsche Welle.

"Most of the investments are done by a broad range of private companies, but there are also joint ventures with governments or purely government-lead investments from a number of Gulf States, China, India and others."

The large scale investments in African land carry "a high risk for the local population's food security," Edmundts added...

...Food shortages and conflicts a possible consequence

With increasing demand for biofuel production reducing areas of arable land around the world, experts fear that the ultimate impact on food security will be global rather than local. Food shortages bring their own threat of instability and unrest. Resources and commodities used in food production will become increasingly sought after, and regions providing these will become more important and protected.

"When the food prices spiked in 2008-2009, we saw serious riots and the governments of Haiti and Madagascar fell," said FoE's Adrian Bebb. "Over the coming years we will see an increase in competition for land and natural resources, especially to meet the demand for biofuels ... Biofuels also need a lot of water and this could be a sticking point between nations."...

See the Report: Africa Up For Grabs click [here](#)

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