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Europe**

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Quick briefing: Biofuels, Land Grabbing, the EU and Mozambique

Introduction

Studies suggest that a third of the land sold or acquired in Africa is intended for fuel crops - some 5 million hectares. Friends of the Earth has looked at cases of land grabbing in 11 countries across Africa, from Ethiopia to Mozambique. While some of this land is sold outright – to private companies, state companies or investment funds – most is leased and some is obtained through contracting with the farmer to grow specific crops (known as “out growing”). A number of, often small, EU companies are involved, sometimes with support or involvement from their national government. Many are keen to vaunt the social and environmental benefits of their business, offering employment and the promise of development to rural areas. However many of their claims do not stand up to scrutiny.

Mozambique

Mozambique is not unusual in seeing agrofuels, particularly sugar-cane and jatropha, as a way of reducing dependence on fuel imports. In Mozambique, the UK-listed company Energem Biofuels has been allocated the rights to 60,000 ha of what was previously community farming and grazing land to grow jatropha and employs more than 250 people (http://www.energem.com/energem_biofuels.asp).

In Mozambique, government officials report that biofuel investors had applied for the rights to use some 12 million acres of land (4.8 million ha) - nearly one-seventh the country's available arable land. There are unverified reports that government received over 3000 agrofuel-related proposals during 2007 alone (<http://motherjones.com/environment/2009/03/ethanols-african-landgrab#com>).

European companies appear to dominate the land acquisitions for agrofuels in Africa. UK company Sun Biofuels has acquired land in Mozambique (5,000 ha) to grow jatropha (<http://www.sunbiofuels.com/projects.html>).

In biofuels sector in Mozambique has had a “lack of public participation, disregard for local culture and practices, false promises, corruption, land conflicts and resource grabs. A well studied case that highlights these practices is that of ProCana Ltd, a 30000 hectare sugarcane project along the Limpopo river that is projected to produce 120 million liters of ethanol. The land chosen for the project, in the District of Chókwé, is not only highly fertile communal grazing land, but had also already been allocated to communities who had agreed to be relocated from their current homes within the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park because of human-animal conflict.” (SwissAid/Friends of the Earth report - <http://www.foei.org/en/resources/publications/pdfs-members/2010/the-jatropha-trap-the-realities-of-farming-jatropha-in-mozambique>)

“A Mozambique National Policy and Strategy for Biofuels was approved on 24 March 2009. The Strategy is an instrument that specifically focuses on the promotion of ethanol (sugarcane and sweet sorghum) and biodiesel (Jatropha). According to this document, biofuel development in Mozambique will be based on

biofuels as an essential activity for the private sector that can be developed by public-private partnerships; and encouragement of international cooperation through the strengthening of existing links between institutions.” (SwissAid/Friends of the Earth report - <http://www.foei.org/en/resources/publications/pdfs-members/2010/the-jatropha-trap-the-realities-of-farming-jatropha-in-mozambique>)

Links with Brazil

In Brazil, fuel crops already take-up an area the size of the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Great Britain combined, mainly in order to supply local demand; but as global demand increases the Brazilian government is planning a five-fold increase in land used for sugar cane production. Brazil’s goal is to replace 10% of the world’s fossil fuel-derived gasoline with agrofuels by 2025.

(www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=6188)

“In Mozambique, the debate on agrofuels has advanced steadily over the last five years, fuelled by industry speculation and demand, grand promises and foreign interests. Visits from influential leaders, such as Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, have further entrenched agrofuels as one of Mozambique’s chosen paths to development. [...] The Mozambican government has been promoting the country as a southern African agrofuels hub, and has succeeded in attracting the interest of a wide range of investors.”

(<http://www.foei.org/en/resources/publications/pdfs-members/2010/the-jatropha-trap-the-realities-of-farming-jatropha-in-mozambique>)

Land and labour

Who owns the land can be a complex and contentious issue, especially in countries where there is no formal means of land registration. In some countries, for example Mozambique, land is owned by the state and can only be leased by foreign developers and in most countries negotiations with different government agencies are required before any land deal is done.

In parts of west Africa, the scale and speed of the land handout has meant that those most directly affected by the biofuel boom have not even been consulted: “They actually took the land when it was already tilled...They haven’t paid us anything, they haven’t told us anything. Some of the people in the town have received money, but in our case they haven’t given us anything... They haven’t offered any job, they haven’t employed us. They haven’t given us any alternative farms. What we want is to get our farms back, because that is what our livelihood is dependent on... we are dying of hunger and there is nothing that we have that is actually our own.” Matilde Ngoene, mother and farmer, Mozambique. (ActionAid report ‘Meals Per Gallon’ http://www.actionaid.org.uk/doc/lib/meals_per_gallon_final.pdf)

Even where jobs are created, there is some evidence that levels of pay are so low that those employed are not actually any better off. Sun Biofuels in Mozambique employs 430 workers on jatropha plantations, but workers are reportedly employed to work a 45 hour week, with longer days than the law permits. Farmers from the União Nacional de Camponeses (UNAC) in Mozambique who have been growing jatropha also report slow growth rates, low yields and problems with pests. (SwissAid/Friends of the Earth report - <http://www.foei.org/en/resources/publications/pdfs-members/2010/the-jatropha-trap-the-realities-of-farming-jatropha-in-mozambique>)

Mozambique data on jatropha

There are presently over 183 000 ha of arable land allocated to jatropha production.

Company	Country	Area	Crop	Source
D1 Oils	UK	5348 ha	Jatropha	Data from CEPAGRI (Centro de Promoção Agrícola), Ministry of Agriculture
Energem Resources	Canada	Rights to 60,000 ha, in discussion over further 60,000 in other provinces; 2,000 ha planted	Jatropha	Interview done during the study, Jatropha! A socio-economic pitfall for Mozambique Company website: http://www.energem.com/energem_biofuels.asp
SGC Energia	Portugal	20,000 ha	Jatropha	Data from CEPAGRI (Centro de Promoção Agrícola), Ministry of Agriculture
Elaion Ag	Germany	1000 ha	Jatropha	Elaion Web Page www.elaion-ag.de
Galp Energia	Portugal	5000 ha	Jatropha	Interview done during the study, Jatropha! A socio-economic pitfall for Mozambique
Sun Biofuels	UK	6000 ha, expected to expand to 15,000 ha	Jatropha	Company website: http://www.sunbiofuels.com/projects.html?projectId=2&page=0
Aviam	Italy	10,000 ha	Jatropha	Public Source – Jornal Notícias (http://www.jornalnoticias.co.mz/pls/notimz2/getxml/pt/contentx/725250) company website: http://www.aviam.it/eng/progetto.html
Viridesco	UK	10,000 ha	Jatropha	Viridesco Web Page (http://www.viridesco.com)

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