



## **EASTERN AFRICA FARMERS FEDERATION**

### **THE ENTEBBE DECLARATION ON LARGE FOREIGN LAND ACQUISITIONS**

**November 10<sup>th</sup> 2010**

#### **Preamble**

We, the member organizations of the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF), the umbrella platform of over 20 million farmers in Eastern Africa, and meeting in Entebbe, Uganda, from 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2010 present the following declaration on “Large foreign land acquisitions”, commonly referred to as “Land Grabbing”.

We recognize that land is a central asset to farmers<sup>1</sup> and the key factor of production for farming as a business. We recognize that small-holder farmers in the Eastern Africa region face a myriad of problems related to land access. The causes of these problems vary from country to country and include historical and cultural causes; poor governance of land; under-funded and under-staffed land control organizations at the country level; poor implementation of existing land regulations; among others. We recognize that women are particularly marginalized in terms of access to, and ownership of land, despite the important role that they play in agriculture and food production.

We recognize that land in this region is under several forms of ownership, including communal land, public land, and private land.

In view of this background, we strongly believe that securing the access to, and ownership of land for small scale farmers especially women, farmer organizations, and pastoralists is key to addressing hunger and poverty. More importantly, this a central factor for wealth creation in the rural areas.

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<sup>1</sup> By farmers, we refer to small-scale family farmers, producers, fisher-folk and pastoralists

## Land grabbing

We recognize that the acquisition of large tracts of land in Africa by foreign investors is an emerging challenge that we are facing. We also recognize that “land grabbing” is also happening within families, local communities involving wealthy nationals at the country level.

We appreciate the research that has been done on this issue by various agricultural research and non-governmental organizations and there is generally a consensus on the following points:

- There are various players in these deals including the foreign investors, national governments, district and local authorities, and international financing institutions.
- The players have various motivations for participating in these land deals. These motivations include the need to secure food supplies in a foreign country; the belief that foreign investment in agriculture will lead to increased opportunities for employment, technology and skill transfer into our region; speculation for higher land prices in the future; and production of crops for bio-fuel production.
- Many of these land deals are shrouded in secrecy and there is little available concrete data on the scale of these investments.

## Current policies

We recognize the various policy efforts at the national, regional, continental and global levels to address land issues.

At the national level, several countries have comprehensive and pro-poor policies, laws and regulations regarding land tenure, access, governance and investment in land. In addition, we understand that some of the foreign investors endeavor to follow the existing country laws and regulations.

At the regional level, we recognize the efforts of the East African Community in advancing the Common Market Protocol and in the formulation of the Agriculture and Rural Development Policy both of which have an implication on land access and investment in land. We acknowledge the position endorsed by the EAC Partner States that access to, and use of land shall be governed by the respective national policies and laws, as per Article 15 of the EAC Common Market Protocol.

At the continental level, we recognize the efforts of the African Union Commission, Africa Development Bank and Economic Commission for Africa in developing a Framework and Guidelines for Land Policy in Africa. Though this framework is comprehensive in addressing most aspects of land access, tenure and governance, it is not a model policy document but a tool to guide national land policy processes.

At the global level, we recognize the efforts to formulate regulatory guidelines related to land access including the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Land and other Natural Resources; the World Bank/FAO/IFAD/UNCTAD 7 Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment that Respects Rights, Livelihoods and Resources; among others.

EAFF recognizes that most farmers in the region are not aware of these existing policies, laws and regulations.

### EAFF Position

EAFF firmly believes that small-holder farmers, producers, fisher-folk and pastoralists should be recognized as the key investors on land and in agriculture in Africa. As a result, policies, laws and regulations around land access, tenure and land rights must be developed primarily to benefit small-holder farmers. Securing the land rights of farmers is a crucial first step to addressing the challenges related to land.

EAFF firmly believes that farmer organizations or farmer associations have a central role to play in empowering farmers to better utilize their land. This role mainly centers around providing business support services such as market facilitation, access to financial credit, access to inputs, extension services, value addition and processing. Secure farmers' land rights must be complemented by the sustainable provision of these business support services, preferably through farmer organizations.

### On potential models for farmers to engage with investors in land

EAFF does not support large investments in land that have the following characteristics:

- That displace farmers from their land
- That do not adequately involve farmers in the consultation process

- That do not contribute to national and regional food security
- That degrade the natural resources including water catchment, and biodiversity
- That are not environmentally sustainable
- That compromises the livelihoods of the local community
- That are promoted by speculators

EAFF views such land deals as illegal.

EAFF believes that there are forms of foreign investment in agricultural land that may benefit small-scale farmers, and there are potential models of engagement between farming communities and large investors in land. These models should have the following guidelines:

1. Farmers and other land users should be adequately consulted during the initial stages of these investments, and their consent must be sought and their land rights respected,
2. Farmers must have capacity to negotiate contracts, and play an effective role in monitoring of these contracts,
3. These investments must strengthen, and not compromise food security,
4. To the extent possible, farmers should attain increasing ownership in the model,
5. The potential social, environmental and economic impacts of these investments must be quantified and shared with a wide range of stakeholders including the existing land users. This should be part of the consultation process.

#### On existing policies

EAFF believes that while the details around land access, tenure and governance should be developed at the national level; there should be consensus on the principles and guidelines at the regional and continental level.

EAFF firmly believes that African countries should adhere to the African Union Framework and Guidelines on land endorsed by the Heads of State in Sirte, Libya in 2009, and launched for implementation during the Conference of African Ministers of Agriculture in Lilongwe, Malawi on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

Where they exist, farmer-friendly laws and regulations around land should be implemented and operationalized. A core element of these regulations is the component of free and prior informed consent of existing land users before any foreign investment on the land commences.

In conclusion, EAFF:

- Firmly believes that land access and utilization is an issue of survival for farming families.
- Believes that land is not only an economic good, but also has significant social and political value.
- CONDEMNS ALL illegal land deals, and DEMANDS that national governments should review such existing transactions and stop supporting any further such transactions.
- Does not support local or foreign investment in agricultural land that marginalizes farming families who are existing users of the land.
- Does not support investors whose sole mission is to profit from the land at the expense of farming families.

EAFF calls on her partners including parliamentarians, civil society organizations, media organizations, research institutions and academia to join us in sensitization and awareness around the foreign direct investments in land and their impacts on the livelihoods of the farmers.

EAFF believes that there is need for capacity building, lobby and advocacy around land rights, policies and regulations.

EAFF strongly believes that the win-win model is sound investments in African farmers that increase their productivity on the land. We firmly view such investments in agriculture and African farmers as an opportunity to reduce poverty, eradicate food insecurity, create wealth, ensure sustainable economic development in Africa, and restores the dignity of the African people.

Signed,



**Philip Kiriro, EAFF PRESIDENT**