

Devastation of Food Farming: Expansion of Biofuels in Sub-saharan Africa

Green group criticizes plans to push biofuels in Mozambique

By [Friends of the Earth Europe](#)

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Brussels, July 14 - Friends of the Earth has strongly criticised an agreement expected to be announced today by EU and Brazilian leaders to expand biofuels in Mozambique. The agreement to promote biofuels in Africa to power European cars is described as “immoral and perverse” by the green group.

Adrian Bebb, food and agriculture campaigner for Friends of the Earth Europe said:

“The ever-growing expansion of biofuels across the globe is not just damaging the environment but often harming people’s livelihoods and access to food too. Using millions of hectares of agricultural land for jatropha and sugar-cane plantations in Mozambique, a country that suffers persistent hunger, to grow crops to power European cars is immoral and perverse. Biofuels are not a solution to the problems of global climate change, nor energy security or poverty in Mozambique.”

Anabela Lemos from JA/Friends of the Earth Mozambique said: “The expansion of biofuels in our country is transforming natural forest and vegetation into fuel crops, is taking away fertile farmland from communities growing food, and creating poor working conditions and conflicts with local people over land ownership. We want real investment in agriculture that allows us to produce food and not fuel for foreign cars.”

A new Friends of the Earth International report, ‘The Jatropha trap’, evaluates jatropha production in Mozambique and highlights the significant gap between the rhetoric and reality. [1]

The presidents of the European Commission and European Council, José Manuel Barroso and Herman van Rompuy, along with Brazilian premier Lula da Silva are today due to launch a partnership agreement with Mozambique to develop bioethanol and biodiesel projects at the Fourth EU-Brazil Summit in Brasilia [2]. During his visit to Brazil, Van Rompuy will also visit COSAN, one the world’s biggest ethanol producers and exporters, on Thursday (July 15).

The expansion of biofuel crops in Mozambique has already been widely criticised for taking away fertile farmland used by communities to grow food, poor working conditions for local workers and conflicts with local people over land ownership. Biofuel investors, mainly European and other foreign companies, have already applied for the rights to use around 4.8 million hectares of land in Mozambique - nearly one-seventh the country’s available arable land.

Adrian Bebb continued: “European biofuels targets are what is driving this global expansion. EU policies are already causing land grabs and deforestation across the South. Instead of doing deals to grab more land in the South, the EU should be scrapping its biofuel policy, investing in environmentally friendly agriculture and decreasing the energy we use for transport.”

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Notes

[1] Friends of the Earth have produced a report and special briefing on the situation in Mozambique.

‘The Jatropha trap? The realities of farming jatropha in Mozambique’ report by Friends of the Earth International and SwissAid is available at: <http://www.foei.org/en/resources/publications/pdfs-members/2010/the-jatropha-trap-the-realities-of-farming-jatropha-in-mozambique>

‘Biofuels, Land Grabbing, the EU and Mozambique’ briefing from Friends of the Earth Europe is available at: www.foeeurope.org/agrofuels/FoEE_Mozambique_biofuels_briefing_July2010.pdf

[2] Reuters “EU, Brazil, Mozambique to sign bioenergy pact” <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJ0E66B0SL20100712?sp=true>

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