

Green Scenery

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The Country's Natural Resources Are Nature's Gift To Us What We Make Of Them Are Our Gift To Posterity

PRESS RELEASE (For Immediate Release)

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Hunger, Food Security and Large Scale Land Leases For Industrial Agriculture Must Be On The Political Agenda Of All Political Parties For The 2012 Election.

Green Scenery has been observing the euphoria around political campaigns during this elections time with great interest. Other than trying to demonstrate who is the party with the largest crowds and number of supporters, we note that nothing much is forthcoming from any of the political parties in terms of political positioning on critical national issues either in rallies or during back stage campaigning.

Green Scenery challenges all political parties to take a position on large scale land acquisitions of foreign direct investors in agriculture - commonly referred to as land grabbing. This is a critical issue as it bears on land rights and livelihoods of the majority of the rural population.

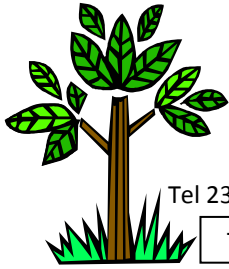
We are concerned: Our investigations reveal that about 1,000,000 hectares or 19% of Sierra Leone's arable land is either being negotiated for or has already been leased by the government to foreign investors over the past 4 years. This colossal land mass subtracted from the country's local farming system is bound to have an adverse effect at many levels on our nation's welfare, including deepening hunger and hurting national food security, increasing livelihood insecurity, aberration of social content, conflict, and pervasive poverty.

Indicators are rife. For instance, Sierra Leone continues to linger in the unenviable "alarming category" ranking 71st out of 79 in the Global Hunger Index with only an improvement margin of 0.5 percent point. Communities in the North and South from which land is appropriated continue to be apprehensive and angry due to the sheer lack of transparency in the land lease deals. They are also frustrated at being prevented from saying no to any land lease deals. This is undemocratic.

Food quality and quantity is visibly seen to be reducing and is expected to decrease even further among affected communities once the full effects of large scale land lease schemes are felt.

Amidst increasing food prices, Sierra Leone continues to import substantial food items with little or no attention paid to national food security. In addition, Sierra Leone is losing millions of dollars in revenue due to tax concessions granted to foreign direct investors, who also pay on average a mere US Dollars 5 per hectare of land in lease hold.

For further information please contact the Executive Director, Joseph Rahall



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At this time of election campaigns and as the country goes to elections, Green Scenery is throwing the challenge to all political parties to put large scale land deals for industrial agriculture, hunger and food security on their agenda. We call for a moratorium on large scale land deals until a proper understanding of its future impact has been gained. We note that the international Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Water and Forestry have been adopted, May 2012 and Sierra Leone must live up to its political commitment by starting to implement the guidelines. We look forward to hearing politicians articulate how they intend to deal with the multi-dimensional challenges currently facing Sierra Leone in the sector, amongst others.

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