

UK company grabs land from Tanzania's poorest to grow biofuel crops

30th October 2011: An ActionAid-led investigation into UK-registered Sun Biofuels has revealed that the company has taken 8,200 hectares of land from the poor people of Kisarawe in Tanzania to grow crops which will be turned into fuel and exported to rich western countries. This land grab has left thousands of Tanzanians even poorer and hungrier than they were before the company arrived.

Sun Biofuels convinced the people of Kisarawe into giving up their land by making promises that it has never kept. It undertook to pay local people full and fair compensation for their land, but very little money has been paid. New wells, clinics, schools and roads were also pledged, but nothing has been built.

Meredith Alexander, Head of Trade & Corporates at anti-poverty charity ActionAid said: **"Poor Tanzanians have been tricked into giving up their land to a biofuels company and are now even worse off than before. This case shows yet again how biofuel crops can ruin poor people's livelihoods in the communities where they are grown as well as driving up food prices. A billion people already don't have enough to eat. Biofuel use could add hundreds of millions more.**

"Moreover, biofuels don't even provide environmental benefits, as many have higher greenhouse gas emissions than the fossil fuels they are designed to replace."

In 2006, Sun Biofuels arrived in Kisarawe District and took land the size of 11,000 football pitches to establish a jatropha plantation – a crop that is grown for biofuels. There was no negotiation on the amount of compensation with villagers, and only those who have really pushed for it have received any money at all. People are no longer allowed onto the land, so they are unable to access the nearest water sources or even

the graves of family members. Their income, which relied on the land for firewood, charcoal and handicrafts has plunged. As a result, some villagers can no longer afford to send their children to school or access health services when they need them.

Ms Alexander continued: "**Land-grabbing to grow biofuel crops is becoming ever more common. Driven by UK government-set biofuel targets, companies like Sun have already taken more than six million hectares of land in Africa alone.**

"Currently 3.5% of all UK petrol and diesel is made up of biofuel so whether you're on the bus or in a car, you have no choice but to contribute to land-grabbing and poverty. We are calling on western governments to stop the greenwash, get rid of their biofuel targets and focus instead on real solutions to reducing climate change."

To help the affected villages, ActionAid Tanzania has helped the 11 communities to form a taskforce to ensure the company's promises are kept, and is lobbying the Tanzanian government.

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Notes to Editors

Sun Biofuels initially employed local people on the plantation, though on a minimum wage which was less than most of them had earned before their land was taken from them. Like many biofuel companies in Africa, Sun Biofuels has now gone into administration, and 650 people in Kisarawe have lost their jobs. It has left those villagers with no income, but even worse, no prospect of returning to their original livelihoods as they are still forbidden access to the land. It is unclear how the new owners will treat their claims.