

Facing the Facts:

Experiences of the Biofuels Boom

Farmlands have been encroached upon and taken over by biofuel companies without adequate compensation for the farmers. These are some of the stories farmers from Mozambique and Senegal told ActionAid staff.



Matilde Ngoene

The majority of **Matilde Ngoene's** land was taken by a biofuels company in Mozambique. Matilde had enough land to feed 15 people all year round, now the small amount of land she has left is not enough to feed her household. The local government gave the company permission to base the project on 40 square hectares of land previously used only for charcoal wood. However, the company has also taken Matilde's farmland - in another area - and destroyed all her crops.

"We just want our farms back - 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."

"They haven't paid us anything, they haven't told us anything. Some of the people in the town there - some of them have received money, but in our case they haven't given us anything and they haven't said anything. They haven't offered any job, they haven't employed us - they haven't offered us anything."

Photographer's Credit: James Oatway/Panos/ActionAid



Jacquilina Manhique

Jacquilina Manhique is fighting to save her lost farmland and source of food in Mozambique.

"Why is that they cannot go and cultivate where they are given? But what is happening is the opposite: [The company] is coming without our consent ... grabbing our land... they have never given anything. We don't know anything, we are not told anything... but there is no information that comes to us."

Photographer's Credit
James Oatway/Panos/ActionAid

In Mozambique, **Julius Ngoene**, the local village chief, is fighting to save his village's source of food and consequently, their way of life. The company has taken over – without permission – 85% of the village farmland and destroyed its crops.

“Our livelihood was dependent on the farms - and the farms they've taken! Whoever has a little money can go and buy something to eat. We have sold most of our animals so that we can go and buy other basic needs.”

Photographer's Credit
James Oatway/Panos/ActionAid



Julius Ngoene



Elisa Alimone Mongue

Elisa Alimone Mongue, 42, is fighting to save her lost farmland and source of food. She is a single mother that survives by making and selling reed mats in the village. A biofuels company set up a sugar cane project in the region in Mozambique. This happened in 2007, but she has yet to be compensated.

“I don't have a farm, I don't have a garden, because the only land that I have has been destroyed. We are just suffering of hunger, because even if I go to look for another farm, they will just destroy it again.”

Photographer's Credit
James Oatway/Panos/ActionAid



Paulo Cardoso Mndolvo

Paulo Cardoso Mndolvo, 60, is fighting to save his lost farmland and source of food in Mozambique. When the local government gave a biofuels company permission for a project, the first person to lose their land was Paulo. In 2007, the company took Paulo's farmland and destroyed all his crops and fencing.

"It's hurts me to see that, they have taken my farm and they've never planted anything. It's just lying there, but I can't go there to plant and I have nothing to feed on. I've no food. My heart is saddened.

End poverty. Together.
End poverty. Together.
End poverty. Together.
End poverty. Together.

It is the same as you coming to my place and I telling you can build your house over there and you can stay there and then you leave your house and get into my house and take my things. What can I do?"

Photographer's Credit: James Oatway/Panos/ActionAid



Sophie Mbodj

Sophie Mbodj of Senegal became concerned over the impact that growing jatropha would have on her community, after the arrival of a biofuels company in the mid 2000s.

"We do not want jatropha here. Villages need more land because families are growing and more land is needed for future generations."

"Women face many issues on land - we do not have access. ...We did not have the courage or empowerment to influence decisions and get land. Now women know their rights better. ... It is very problematic for women to access land."

Photographer's Credit ActionAid

Mustafa Lo



act:onaid

Mustafa Lo is concerned about the presence of a biofuels company in his community in Senegal.

“Many things will be affected by the project - health clinics, wells, roads, villages and people. This project needs a great deal of consultation but there wasn’t any - in addition there has been no compensation. The land is just given out by the head of the rural council - there has been no vote, no agreement and no discussion.”

Photographer’s Credit
ActionAid

Lurdes Jacinto Siteo



“We want to earn our living on our own farms, that we have been earning our living ever since. So we just want our farms and [the company] should go cultivate on the land that was allocated, we don’t want their money.”

Photographer’s Credit
James Oatway/Panos/
ActionAid

Lurdes Jacinto Siteo is fighting to save her lost farmland and source of food in Mozambique. A biofuels company is setting up a sugar cane project in the region and poor people’s land has been taken for their project.

“The main concern that we have is that we want our land back - we don’t want the money that it [the company] has, because it cannot manage to feed all of us, it cannot manage to feed us.”



For more information:
www.actionaidusa.org
ActionAid International USA
1420 K Street, NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20005
202-835-1240

ActionAid fights to end poverty and the injustices that cause it by helping poor and excluded people to secure and exercise their rights.