

Global biofuel drive raises risk of eviction for African farmers

African farmers risk being forced from their lands by investors or government projects as global demand for biofuels encourages changes in crop cultivation.

Research from the University of Edinburgh has found that livelihoods may be put at risk if African farmland is turned over to growing crops for biofuel.

With growing pressure to find alternatives to oil, global biofuel production trebled between 2003 and 2007 and is forecast to double again by next year. In Africa, countries including Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe have enacted pro-biofuel national strategies.

Dr Tom Molony, who contributed to the research, said that the allocation of land for biofuel production by government projects or wealthy investors could mean that the rural poor would be forced off their land.

He added that biofuel projects had also raised accusations of 'neo-colonial' behaviour, with wealthy countries acquiring vast tracts of land in poorer nations. In Madagascar, South Korean company Daewoo Logistics has attempted to buy an area half the size of Belgium to farm corn and palm oil for biofuel.

Organisations including the World Bank have claimed that diverting land to produce biofuels has contributed to rising food prices, which have forced millions into poverty.

Dr Molony said: "The threat that increased biofuel production poses to food security is particularly profound for African countries where food is scarce already."

The briefing, "Biofuels, food security and Africa", is published in the journal *African Affairs* in July.

Provided by University of Edinburgh

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