Let's Expose Land Grabbing!
This comic strip has been produced as part of the “Collaboration between Slow Food and the Piedmont Regional Authority for actions in Sub-Saharan Africa”, supported by the Piedmont Regional Authority.

Illustrated by Tamru Yilak Bezabh
Edited by Roba Bulga, Laura Drago, Michèle Mesmain, Serena Milano
Translated by Jacopo Borazzo, Simone Gie
Graphics and layout by Alessia Paschetta
Printed by La Stamperia – Carrù (Cn), Italy

Printed on recycled paper
It’s a day like any other in Mutonga. We are in Africa, but what’s about to happen could take place anywhere in the world. A plane crosses the blue sky looking for a runway to land on.

Three authoritarian-looking men get out. A car waits to take them to Mutonga.
WORD SPREADS QUICKLY, THE WHOLE VILLAGE RUSHES TO THEM.

WE’LL BRING YOU ALL THIS...

ROADS... MODERN AGRICULTURE... PROGRESS... WORK...

THE THREE MEN START TALKING. THEY HAVE COME WITH A SPECIFIC PURPOSE: TO INTRODUCE THE NOPE CO. PROJECT THAT PEOPLE HAVE HEARD OF LATELY.

THEY TALK ABOUT IMPORTANT SUBJECTS. AFTER ALL, LIFE IS HARD HERE, THERE ARE NO SCHOOLS OR HOSPITALS, THE RAINFALL THAT THE WHOLE VILLAGE RELIES ON IS BECOMING MORE SCARCE EVERY YEAR.

AH, WHAT RELIEF! THINGS WILL GET BETTER AND WON’T END UP LIKE THE NEARBY VILLAGE OF CHANCHO, WHERE NO ONE WAS EVEN CONSULTED!
Anyway, there's no time to talk or even think. Everything is decided quickly: the investors will lease the land from the government and it is theirs for 99 years. Bulldozers arrive, destroying pastures and the harvest.
The Baro River, whose floods used to irrigate the valley, is diverted. The few remaining pastures dry up.

My father was a shepherd, and so was my grandfather. What will I do? Is this what progress is!?
THIS IS IT, THE PROJECT: WHERE ONCE GREW SORGHUM, MILLET AND TEFF, NOW THERE ARE ONLY HUGE PLANTATIONS OF JATROPHA. WHAT A WEIRD PLANT, NO ONE AROUND HERE HAS EVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT BEFORE! ONLY A HANDFUL OF VILLAGERS ARE HIRED TO WORK ON THEIR ANCESTORS’ LAND. HUGE MACHINES DO MOST OF THE LABOUR.
All of the Jatropha's harvest is shipped abroad. This weird plant is not edible, but is used to generate energy! A long line of noisy trucks pass by all day on the newly built road on their way to the harbor.
THOSE NOT HIRED BY THE PROJECT ARE FORCED TO LEAVE THEIR LAND. THE EARTH HAS BECOME ARID AND POISONED BY CHEMICAL FERTILIZERS.
What am I gonna do in the capital?

Those forced to leave the land try to find a job in the nearby city and a place to live in the city outskirts.

However there is another possibility. It’s difficult, but sometimes the community members manage to assert their rights and contact the media and local organizations and NGOs.
LET'S EXPOSE THE PROJECT!!

WE WANT OUR LAND BACK!
It's rare, but this time investors are forced to retreat.

DID YOU HEAR?
WE HAVE TO LEAVE!

 kaps kaps !!!
OUR MONEY!!
SLOWLY, TRADITIONAL CROPS RETURN AND THE ANIMALS GO BACK TO THEIR PASTURES. SORGHUM, MILLET AND TEFF ARE HARVESTED AGAIN TO FEED FAMILIES AND BE SOLD AT LOCAL MARKETS.
IN MUTONGA THEY CELEBRATE. ELDERLY PEOPLE, CHILDREN AND ADULTS PRAISE THEIR LAND.

IT WOULD BE NICE IF ALL LAND GRABBING STORIES ENDED LIKE THIS, BUT IT’S NOT THE CASE. INSTEAD, TENS OF MILLIONS OF HECTARES HAVE BECOME THE OBJECT OF SPECULATION IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, AND THE SCENARIO IS GETTING WORSE. WE NEED RULES, MORE ATTENTION FROM INSTITUTIONS AND PUBLIC OPINION AND GENUINE INVESTMENTS IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT. LET’S EXPOSE LAND GRABBING!!
**Slow Food** is an international association that works to defend food biodiversity, disseminate taste education and bring producers and consumers together. Insofar as it believes that the planet is influenced by the food choices each of us make, it promotes sustainable agriculture and knowledge of food and its origins.

**Slow Food** has more than 100,000 members and supporters in 150 countries. It promotes food that is **good** for the palate, **clean** for the environment and **fair** for producers and consumers, raising the profile of the former’s labour and protecting the latter’s wallet.

Slow Food launched an international campaign against land grabbing in 2010.

Visit [www.slowfood.com/landgrabbing](http://www.slowfood.com/landgrabbing)

Write to us at landgrabbing@slowfood.com to share your experiences, comments or ideas.

Become a Slow Food member
Join us at [www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)