

FOOD CRISIS AND THE GLOBAL LAND GRAB

GOVERNMENTS AND CORPORATIONS ARE BUYING UP FARMLAND IN OTHER COUNTRIES TO GROW THEIR OWN FOOD - OR SIMPLY TO MAKE MONEY



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S.Africa farmers to conclude Congo, Libya land deals

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Reuters | 30 September 2009

- Congo land deal to be signed in mid-October
- AgriSA to sign 35,000 hectare land deal with Libya

By Muchena Zigomo

PRETORIA, Sept 30 (Reuters) - South Africa's largest farmers' union expects to conclude a multimillion hectare farmland deal with the Republic of Congo and agree a smaller land lease with Libya next month, its deputy president said.

Theo de Jager, Deputy President of farmers' grouping AgriSA said on Wednesday the union expected to finalise its 10 million hectare deal with the Republic of Congo in mid October.

"The minister of Agriculture of the Congo Republic will visit us from 14-22 October to finalise the agreement," de Jager told an agriculture conference.

The deal, one of the biggest land agreements on the continent and part of Congo's plan to improve food security, would allow South African farmers to lease the land for up to 105 years to grow maize, soya beans as well as for poultry and dairy.

De Jager said the union had received offers of farmland from several other African countries and expected to sign a 35,000 hectare land deal with the Libyan government in October.

"We'll be leaving for Libya in the next three weeks to finalise the deal," de Jager told reporters.

"The agreement would mainly be to grow grapes and olives."

He said the union will finalise details about investment and property protection agreements with the Libyan government during the trip.

South Africa has one of the most developed agriculture sectors on the continent and its farmers are looking to expand into other countries.

They are joined in the scramble for land by rivals from Italy, France, Turkey, China and Israel.

"We're thinking about this as an investment. It's not a matter of negativity about South Africa in the least ... it's simply that we are positive about the rest of Africa," de Jager said.

Analysts point to potentially huge rewards in investing in farmland as the world population grows, while many see climate change and biofuels choking off the supply of arable land.

Advocates of such land deals say they can act as a motor for development of the farm sectors of poor countries, while critics warn of a land grab to the detriment of local farmers.

Source: Reuters



The agreement with Libya would mainly be to grow grapes and olives

Marc Ona Essangui, Executive Secretary of Brainforest NGO and 2009 **Goldman Prize** recipient, is facing possible jail time and a fee of nearly \$10,000.00 US after being convicted of defamation by a Gabonese court last week. Ona allegedly spoke out against possible government corruption involved in a land deal with Singapore-based Olam. To show your support for Ona and his urgent situation, Ona asks you to consider sending a message to Ali Bongo, President of Gabon (alibongoondimba@mac.com) and to Liban Soleman, the Chief of Cabinet (liban.soleman@presidence.ga). See [here](#) for more info.

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