



Agribusiness on rise in north Uganda region where rebels fought

Published: 20 Aug 2015

Short URL: <http://farmlandgrab.org/25236>

Posted in: [Germany](#) | [South Africa](#) | [US](#) | [Uganda](#)

[Comments \(0\)](#) [Print](#) [Email this](#)

Reuters | 20 August 2015

Agribusiness on rise in north Uganda region where rebels fought

By Elias Biryabarema

GULU, Uganda - For nearly two decades, the Lord's Resistance Army stalked the grasslands of north Uganda, abducting children as soldiers and sex slaves in its war against the government. Now at peace, the land is being put to a new use: large-scale agriculture.

Uganda is Africa's largest coffee exporter and its strong economic growth has been boosted by manufacturing, telecoms, retail and banking. The government wants agribusiness to be the next big sector.

Investors have poured tens of millions of dollars into a landscape now dotted with tracts of maize, rice, sunflower, sesame and commercial forests.

"Northern Uganda has the potential to become the bread basket for not only Uganda but even for East Africa," Martin Maugustini, country manager for Afgri Uganda (AU), a unit of South African agribusiness giant Afgri Limited, told Reuters.

Developing the north is not easy. The region borders war-torn South Sudan and its crops must be trucked long distances over rough roads. Farming is dependent on rainfall as the River Nile is not developed for irrigation.

Even so, the legacy of the conflict that pitted the government against warlord Joseph Kony gives the plan to expand large-scale agriculture an unusual advantage.

During the war, the military herded the population into camps to separate them from rebels. The displacement caused hardship but when the war ended 10 years ago, leaving President Yoweri Museveni in full control of a country he has ruled since 1986, many people chose to stay in the camps, which had become sprawling urban centres.

The result is large tracts of virgin, fertile land that may give the country of 45 million an advantage over Kenya and Ethiopia, which lead the region in mechanised agriculture.

Afgri Uganda has invested \$10 million since 2013, first leasing a 6,400-tonne warehouse in the regional capital Gulu for buying, processing and bagging maize, and is completing a warehouse and silo that towers over the plains of Nwoya district and can process 15 tonnes per hour.

Another company, Amatheon, started cultivating maize, sorghum and sunflower in Nwoya in 2013, and has spent \$15 million and planted 1,700 hectares so far, said Chief Executive Carl Heinrich Bruhn.

Bruhn says his company aims to plant another 3,000 hectares this year, spend \$100 million beyond that and contract 5,000 smallholder farmers to supply it with produce.

RESENTMENT

But resentment is on the rise against the investors many locals see as outsiders grabbing land that is rightfully theirs.

In June, legislator Odonga Otto told an election rally that people should have lots of children to help reoccupy the land.



Above, Afgri CEO Chris Venter. The South African company is 60% owned by AgriGroupe Investments through an offshore structure, while the remaining 40% is held by South African shareholders including South Africa's Public Investment Corporation, and Afgri management. (Photo: [Financial Mail](#))

Who's involved?

Select Category

Events

22 Sep 2015 - Singapore
Global AgInvesting Asia



Posts

Comments

Recent posts

[Will KLK proceed with the corrupt Sepik oil palm deal?](#)

24 Aug 2015 | No Comments

[On the take](#)

23 Aug 2015 | No Comments

[Los acaparadores de tierras del Corredor de Nacala: una nueva era de lucha contra las plantaciones coloniales en el norte de Mozambique](#)

21 Aug 2015 | No Comments

[Super fund's \\$150m farm buy](#)

21 Aug 2015 | No Comments

[Recuperación de Territorio Mapuche: El fin de la GEOP era detener a los indígenas](#)

20 Aug 2015 | No Comments

[Accaparement des terres : Les victimes accentuent la pression](#)

20 Aug 2015 | No Comments

[Agribusiness on rise in north Uganda region where rebels fought](#)

20 Aug 2015 | No Comments

[Argentina: Represión a mapuches en tierras usurpadas por Benetton](#)

18 Aug 2015 | No Comments

[Cambodian government takes umbrage at US Congressman's comments on land grabs](#)

18 Aug 2015 | No Comments

[Sucre : le mauricien Alteo s'implante au Kenya](#)

"I call upon each family in this region to have at least eight to nine children so that in eight or nine years time they can be able to effectively occupy the remaining land," he said, according to local media reports.

Rows over who actually owns the land has hampered some plans. A \$100-million, 40,000-acre sugar plantation and processing plant by the Madhvani Group, one of Uganda's most established agribusinesses, stalled due to a land ownership dispute.

The government has for years tried to convince locals to exchange their land for a project stake. Locals say investors should hold direct talks with landowners and farmers to lease or sell land or create business partnerships.

Amatheon Agri Uganda Ltd (AAUL), a unit of Berlin-based Amatheon Agri Group, attracted by the region's "rich and virgin agricultural land," negotiated leases directly with owners directly rather than going through the government, as Madhvani had done.

But that process can be tricky, especially as much of the land lacks clear titles of ownership.

Anthony Akol refused an offer for his 509 acre plot, saying the bid the investor made was low because he lacked land title. Since then he uses just 40 acres for rice farming, the maximum his own finances could afford.

Investors have not been deterred, however.

Gulu Agricultural Development Company Ltd (GADCL), owned by South African entrepreneur Bruce Robertson, leased a rusting 1960s warehouse in Gulu, spruced it up and started buying organic cotton for process and export.

The company started business in the region in 2009 backed by the New York-based Acumen fund, a non-profit organisation, and has since expanded to buy sesame, chilli and sunflower from 35,000 contract farmers.

It has also planted more than 1,000 acres of eucalyptus, pine and teak and plans to build a plant to produce cooking oil from sesame and sunflowers rather than selling the seeds raw.

(Editing by Matthew Mpoke Bigg and Robin Pomeroy)

Source: [Reuters](#)

18 Aug 2015 | No Comments

[more](#)

Languages

[Amharic](#) [Bahasa Indonesia](#)
[Català](#) [Catala](#) [Dansk](#)
[Deutsch](#) [English](#) [Español](#)
[français](#) [Italiano](#) [Kurdish](#)
[Malagasy](#) [Nederlands](#)
[Português](#) [Suomi](#)
[Svenska](#) [Türkçe](#) [العربي](#)

Special content

[audio](#) [contracts](#)
 [off-topic](#) [video](#) [water](#)
 [wikileaks](#) [women](#)

Archives

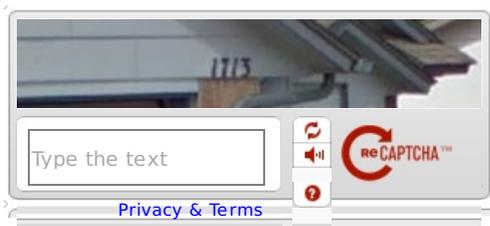
Select month

Post a comment

Name

Email address (optional - if you want a reply)

Comment



[Privacy & Terms](#)

Submit

- [Act Now! for a better PNG](#)
- [Afrique-Europe-Interact](#)
- [Alliance paysanne « Stop aux accaparements des terres »](#)
- [Asian Peasant Coalition](#)
- [awasMIFEE!](#)
- [Cameroon Veritas](#)
- [Clean sugar campaign \(Cambodia\)](#)
- [CNOP](#)
- [Coalición contra el Acaparamiento - Colombia](#)
- [Collectif NOPALME](#)
- [Collectif pour la Défense des Terres du Ndiael](#)
- [Collectif pour la Défense des Terres Malgaches](#)
- [Dakar Appeal | Llamamiento de Dakar | Appel de Dakar](#)
- [Et maintenant, nos terres](#)
- [FIAN](#)
- [Friends of Yala Swamp](#)
- [Gardarem la terre et la mer](#)
- [Global Land Grabbing II](#)
- [Green Scenery](#)
- [Infos acquisitions terres Afrique](#)
- [La Via Campesina](#)
- [Land Inc.](#)
- [Land Justice for West Africa](#)
- [Le Hub Rural](#)
- [MILDA](#)
- [No land no food no life](#)
- [Oakland Institute](#)
- [openlandcontracts.org](#)
- [Our land our business](#)
- [PANAP](#)
- [Paren aquí vive gente](#)
- [PCSF](#)
- [Plateforme pour une agriculture socialement durable](#)
- [Projet ReAct](#)
- [Re:Common](#)
- [SiLNoRF](#)
- [Stop Africa Land Grab](#)
- [STOP Land Grabbing](#)
- [Synergie Paysanne](#)
- [Thoranéy: the land issue in Cambodia](#)
- [World Rainforest Movement](#)
- [Zamana](#)
- [□□□□□□□□](#)