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Dakar, 7 November 2013

Groups unveil who is behind Senhuile-Senethanol landgrab project in Senegal

- Responding to concerns about possible links to money laundering, financial structure of controversial italo-senegalese Senhuile-Senethanol project examined and exposed
- Some company officials have dubious past
- Ultimate ownership hidden behind an offshore shell company in New York
- Such secrecy, plus the project's constantly changing business plan, indicate that the investors cannot be trusted
- Meanwhile, many other questions raised by communities affected by the project remain unanswered; company refuses to talk to investigators supporting them

The Reflection and Action Group on Land in Senegal, a coalition of 30 peasant and civil society organisations in Senegal, together with the international NGO GRAIN and the Italian organisation

Re:Common have published today their findings on the investors behind the Senhuile-Senethanol project. We are publishing this information on our website. If you do not wish to use our site, we will assume that you are happy with it.

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They undertook this study in order to answer the question that had been raised in Senegal about a possible link between the project and money laundering. The study managed to unveil a complicated structure, and a troubled history, behind the project. But it ran into a wall of secrecy surrounding the ultimate beneficiaries of a shell company in New York which appears to control the capital of Senethanol.

Senhuile is controlled for 51% by the Tampieri Financial Group in Italy and 49% by the Senegalese company Senethanol. Senethanol was created with funds from the investment group ABE Italia (75%) and the Senegalese businessman Gora Seck (25%). Today, ABE Italia is in liquidation and its shares in Senethanol are apparently reverting to its mother company ABE International LLC based in New York. ABE International, a shell company registered at the same address as hundreds of other companies, is managed by Benjamin Dummai, the Israelo-Brazilian director of Senhuile, but its ultimate owners are unknown because the company is not obliged to make such information public.

Benjamin Dummai has a shady past in as much as Brazilian authorities have found him guilty, at different moments, of tax evasion on the one hand and fraude on the other. As to Gora Seck, he runs several companies, including in the mining sector, of two are jointly run with a official from the Segenalese Ministry of Mines.

In 2010, the Rural Council of Fanaye allocated 20 000 ha to Senethanol to produce biofuels for the European market. In 2011, the project was suspended by Abdoulaye Wade after fatal confrontatins broke out between local communities and security forces. The project was restarted in 2012 to produce sunflower seeds for export to Italy on a different 20 000 ha that Macky Sall rezoned and allocated to the investors for 50 years in the Ndial Reserve. Last week, Gora Seck announced that the project would “stop all economic activity” in order to produce seeds for peanut production for the Senegalese state.

“Who can trust such investors?”, exclaimed a spokesperson for the Ndial Collective of 37 villages affected by the project. “They take our lands, they take our lives, they encircle us to the point that our livestock – the source of our livelihoods – can no longer graze, and all of that for what?” he continued.

“It is very worrisome that the Senegalese government wants to rely more and more on the private sector to invest in agricultural development, including foreign investors like Tampieri or ABE Italia or ABE International, in the name of the national interest. We don’t see how this project supports the national interest, on the contrary!” insisted the [National Council for Rural Concertaion and Cooperation (CNCR), member of] CRAFS.

GRAIN and Re:Common, in solidarity with the local communities and the CRAFS, call on everyone who is struggling against land grabbing, particularly social movements in Italy, to join them in calling for an end to this project and the returning of the lands to the herders and peasants.

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You can download the findings of the study at the following websites:

Tags: [land grab](#), [Re:Common](#), [Senegal](#)

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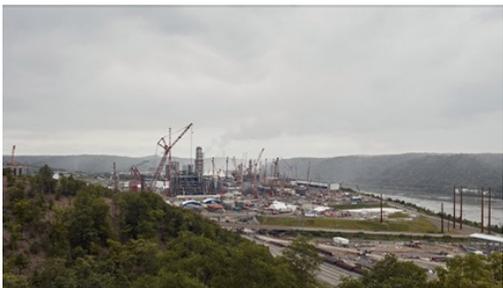
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This anthology is the end product of a collective writing workshop project promoted by the association Re:Common and run by Wu Ming 2 between January and June 2014. [Read more](#)

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