Sudanese farmers call for transparency on China land lease

Traditional cotton harvest in El Gezira (file photo: sudanvisondaily)

The farmers of El Rahad agricultural project, which straddles the border between Sudan's south-eastern El Gedaref and El Gezira states, have warned against leasing the project's land to China, and called for transparency on the matter.

They have referred to frequent meetings involving Presidential Aide and former Oil Minister Awad El Jaz with the project administration and a number of farmers discussing partnership with China to develop the project.

In an interview with Radio Dabanga, Farmer Yousif Rahal has called on the authorities to be transparent and give the public full information about the details of the partnership with China.

National debt

He has stressed the farmers' categorical rejection of the trend to lease land to China for repaying Sudan's debts, saying that they are ready to defend their agricultural land.

He said the government's dissolution of the Farmers Union had led to the farmers not playing a role in crucial decisions about their agricultural projects.

He told Radio Dabanga about the exposure of large areas of the project to thirst because of the disruption of a number of water pumps.

He has not ruled out that the authorities deliberately neglected the project in order to allocate space to China for the debts owed by Sudan.

Water shortage

He has warned of a shortage of drinking water for the people of the area during the coming period.

He said that the project administration has announced the cultivation of half of the project land during the next agricultural season because of water scarcity.

He criticised the project administration for starting the cultivation of new lands of the project during the previous seasons without taking into account the lack of water.

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