

# Farmers demand the World Bank and Wall Street stop grabbing their lands at opening of the Bank's annual conference in Washington, DC.

Wednesday 25 April 2012, by [La Via Campesina](#) (Date first published: 23 April 2012).

The World Bank is playing a leading role in a global land grab, says farmers' movement and its international allies. [1] The World Bank's policies for land privatisation and concentration, have paved the way for corporations from Wall Street to Singapore to take upwards of 80 million hectares of land from rural communities across the world in the past few years, they say in a collective statement released today at the opening of the World Bank's Conference on Land and Poverty in Washington DC.

"Rural people are losing control over land and water because of this global land grab," says Honduran farmer leader Rafael Alegria of the international farmers' movement La Via Campesina. "We want the land grab stopped and the lands taken to be returned to the local communities. In Honduras, we demand that the law for rural modernisation promoted by the World Bank be canceled and that a new law for agricultural transition be adopted".

The World Bank will be meeting with government officials and private sector investors during its annual conference, where they will discuss large-scale farmland acquisitions by foreign corporations in developing countries. The World Bank will be promoting its controversial Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment (RAI).

"The World Bank's RAI principles are an attempt to legitimise corporate land grabs and the expansion of an industrial model of agriculture that is destroying people's livelihoods and the planet," says Giulia Franchi of Campagna per la Riforma della Banca Mondiale. "Decades of World Bank programmes promoting market-based approaches to land management have set the stage for a massive takeover of peoples' lands, massive environmental destruction, and a massive backlash by farmers and other frontline communities."

The global land grab was denounced at over 250 worldwide protest actions on April 17<sup>th</sup>, the International Day of Peasant's Struggle. Tomorrow another major farmland investor conference in New York City involving the World Bank and big money managers like the Canadian Pension Fund, TIAA-CREF and PensionDanmark, will be targeted for protests by New York's Ethiopian Community, Occupy Wall Street and others. [2]

"U.S. farmers, particularly young and beginning farmers, can't afford the rising costs of good land and are in no position to compete with speculators and Wall Street investment schemes," says Bob St.Peter, Director of Food for Maine's Future and Executive Committee member of the National Family Farm Coalition. "Here in the U.S., 400 million acres of farmland are going to change hands over the next 20 years. Whether those lands will support diversified family farms or multi-national corporations is one of the most important political questions in the U.S. today."

The National Family Farm Coalition and international allies will hold a media teleconference from Washington, DC on Monday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 11:00 am EDT.

*Participants at the press conference are:*

Rafael Alegria, La Via Campesina (Honduras)

Bob St. Peter, National Family Farm Coalition (USA)

Giulia Franchi, Campagna per la Riforma della Banca Mondiale (Italy)

Devlin Kuyek, GRAIN (Canada)

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## Footnotes

[1] Signatories to the statement are Campagna per la Riforma della Banca Mondiale, FIAN International, Focus on the Global South, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, La Via Campesina, and the Transnational Institute.

[2] For information about the NYC event contact Corbin Laedlein, Theodros Tamirat, and Tedla Asfaw