
[Report: Communities in Africa fight back against the land grab for palm oil](#)

A new report on the state of industrial oil palm plantations in Africa shows how communities are turning the tide on a massive land grab in the region. >>> [Read the report online](#) / >>> [Download in pdf](#)

Africa is being targeted by agribusiness companies as a new frontier for the expansion of industrial oil palm plantations. Between 2000-2015, companies signed oil palm plantation concession agreements with African governments covering over 4.7 million hectares. Most of these agreements were signed without the knowledge of the affected communities.

But these companies are now struggling to move ahead with their projects. According to the report, there has been a significant decline in the number and total area of land deals for industrial oil palm plantations in Africa over the past five years, from 4.7 million hectares to a little over 2.7 million hectares. And only a small fraction of this area — 220,608 hectares — has been converted to oil palm plantations or been replanted with new palms during the past decade.

The report finds that struggles by communities to defend their lands has been key to slowing this expansion of industrial oil palm plantations in the region.

The report also highlights how small scale systems of oil palm cultivation are thriving across Africa, while the corporate model is failing. Communities in many parts of West and Central Africa have a long history of cultivating oil palms and producing palm oil without the involvement of big companies, and women are usually the main actors in these small scale systems. Today, smallholders in African countries, supplying small-scale mills, account for the vast majority of palm oil that is produced on the continent, and they are far more capable of expanding production to meet the growing local demand, if they have access to lands and markets. They also produce a palm oil that is of higher quality, more nutritious and more suited to local food cultures, whereas the industrial plantations produce a highly-refined palm oil designed for industrial uses, including unhealthy, ultra-processed foods and biofuels.

Diverse small scale production must be the foundation for the future of palm oil production on the continent. Communities do not need companies to manage their lands and to produce palm oil. Companies only drain the profits to far away places and their model of production leaves nothing but misery and pollution for local people.

The authors of the report, most of them working directly with communities impacted by oil palm plantations, call for an immediate ban on all future, large-scale oil palm plantation projects and a halt to those currently being implemented. Where large-scale plantations already exist, they call for the lands to be returned to the control of the local communities, who can then develop a vision for how they want to utilise and organise these lands, now and into the future. They also say that the concession agreements governments signed with companies, most of which are in violation of the law and the rights of the local communities, must be scrapped.

It is time to turn the page on colonial plantations in Africa, and put oil palms back into the hands of communities!

The authors of the report are ADAPPE-Guine?e, Bread for All (Switzerland), CDHD (Congo-Brazzaville), COPACO (DRC), Culture Radio (Sierra Leone), GRAIN, Joegbahn Land Protection Organization (Liberia), JVE Co?te d'Ivoire, MALOA (Sierra Leone), Muyissi Environnement (Gabon), NRWP (Liberia), RADD (Cameroon), REFEB (Co?te d'Ivoire), RIAO-RDC (DRC), SEFE (Cameroon), SiLNoRF (Sierra Leone), Synaparcam (Cameroon), UVD (Co?te d'Ivoire), WRM, YETIHO (Co?te d'Ivoire), YVE Ghana.

The report is published on the eve of the International day of struggles against monoculture tree plantations (21 September 2019). For information about the various actions being organised to celebrate this day in Africa and elsewhere, see: <https://wrm.org.uy/all-campaigns/international-day-against-monoculture-tree-plantations-2019/>

[>>> Read the report online](#)

[>>> Download in pdf](#)