

Università degli Studi di Trento School of International Studies	<i>Master's Degree in European and International Studies</i> English Language Reading Comprehension Text 3	2012 – 2013 17 June 201
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In the text below, the opening sentence of each paragraph has been removed. Decide which of the sentences in the box starts off each paragraph. Write the appropriate letter next to the right number. There are more opening sentences than paragraphs – two are not used!

Our Land, Our Lives

Oxfam Briefing Note on the global land rush

You don't need guns to kill people. When you take food from a village by destroying farm lands and cash crops, you are starving its people [...] These things must stop. Our people deserve the right to survive. They shouldn't be denied their land. Alfred Brownell, Green Advocates, Liberia

INTRODUCTION

23) ... As the scale and pace of large-scale land acquisitions increases globally, evidence is mounting that the land rush is out of control and that the price being paid by affected communities is unacceptably high. A huge amount of land has been sold off or leased out globally in the past decade: an area eight times the size of the UK. In poor countries, foreign investors bought up an area of land the size of London every six days between 2000 and 2010. Commercial interest in land could accelerate once again as recent food price spikes motivate rich countries to secure their own food supplies and make land a more secure and attractive option for investors and speculators. The 2008 boom in food prices is widely recognized as having triggered a surge in investor interest in land: from mid-2008–2009 reported agricultural land deals by foreign investors in developing countries rocketed by around 200 per cent.

24) ... Responsible investment and support is vital and poor countries desperately need it. Indeed Oxfam's calculations suggest that the land acquired between 2000 and 2010 has the potential to feed a billion people, equivalent to the number of people who currently go to bed hungry each night. But the sad fact is that very few if any of these land investments benefit local people or help to fight hunger. Two-thirds of agricultural land deals by foreign investors are in countries with a serious hunger problem. Yet perversely, precious little of this land is being used to feed people in those countries, or going into local markets where it is desperately needed. Instead, the land is either being left idle, as speculators wait for its value to increase and then sell it at a profit, or it is predominantly used to grow crops for export, often for use as biofuels. About two-thirds of foreign land investors in developing countries intend to export everything they produce on the land. Africa has borne the brunt of this, with an area the size of Kenya acquired for agriculture by foreign investors in just ten years, but the experience on other continents is similar. World Bank and IMF research has shown that most of the land being sold off is in the poorest countries with the weakest protection of people's land rights.

25) ... In Cambodia, NGOs estimate that an area equivalent to between 56 and 63 per cent of all arable land in the country has been handed out to private companies. In Honduras, the toll of people killed in a land conflict in the Bajo Aguán region has risen to over 60, and shows no sign of stopping.

26) ... To take the example of just one commodity, the area used for oil palm cultivation has increased nearly eightfold over the last 20 years to an estimated 7.8 million ha in 2010 and is expected to double again by 2020. Land resources, already under pressure from climate change, water depletion and the need for conservation, will be increasingly in demand for a range of economic uses: carbon sequestration, production of biofuels, timber and other non-food crops, and speculative investment. These uses will come into direct conflict with the need for more land to feed a growing global population. Additionally, the volatility of food prices has led richer countries that are dependent on food imports – such as the Gulf States – to acquire large amounts of land in developing countries in order to ensure a secure supply of food for their domestic needs. As food prices increase as a result of these multiple pressures, land is becoming a more lucrative asset for powerful interests and investors.

27) ... The World Bank, as the largest development organization in the world with a multi-billion-dollar portfolio and as a major influence on both governments and the private sector, must act now to put its own house in order and set an example to ensure that investments benefit the poor – an example that must then be followed by investors and governments globally.

28) ... A freeze would create space to develop policy and institutional protections to ensure that no Bank-

supported project resulted in land-grabbing¹⁸ and would allow time for the wider impacts of land transfers on poverty and food security to be assessed. The required protections would include:

- local communities to be informed about and be able to give or refuse consent to a project, and be compensated for any loss of land or livelihoods;
- a guarantee of full project (and sub-project) transparency, so that investors can be held accountable both to affected communities and to the government;
- capacity and encouragement for governments to improve land tenure governance and to increase local communities' security of land tenure.

29) The Bank's complaints ombudsman investigated and discovered serious systematic problems, as a result of which Bank standards had been contravened and Bank staff had been able to claim (incorrectly) that the project would have „minimal, or no direct, adverse social or environmental impacts“. There was such a controversy that the then Bank President, Robert Zoellick, suspended the Bank's lending to the palm oil sector for 18 months until a new strategy was in place, supposedly intended to ensure that such problems did not happen again.

30) ... Such an increase is welcome, but it also heightens risks which must be addressed. Since 2008 alone, formal complaints have been brought by communities affected by Bank investments that they say have violated their land rights. While responsibility for land-grabbing lies with many actors – from developing and developed country governments to private investors – the World Bank has more influence than any other to change the terms of the debate. The World Bank plays a pivotal role in land acquisitions in many ways: (I) as a source of direct financial support for investments in land; (II) as a policy adviser to developing country governments; and (III) as a standard-setter for other investors. It could take a vital first step to reining in the global land rush by freezing its own investments in large-scale land acquisitions for six months and putting its own house in order. The need to act now is urgent.

Letter	Opening sentence
a	The global economy is expected to triple by 2050, demanding ever more from scarce natural and agricultural resources.
b	Oxfam backs greater investment in agriculture and increased support to small-scale food producers.
c	Today, stories of communities driven from their lands, often at the barrel of a gun, left destitute and unable to feed their families, have become all too familiar.
d	In 2007, indigenous people in West Kalimantan, Indonesia complained to the World Bank that a palm oil company it supported had cut down their forest and forced them from their land.
e	The immediate impacts of land grabs on affected communities have been well documented and include gross human-rights violations, destitution, loss of livelihood, destruction of property and crops, and lack of compensation.
f	In May 2012, the United Nations adopted international guidelines with the goal of „improving secure access to land, fisheries and forests and protecting the rights of millions of often very poor people“.
g	Oxfam is calling on the World Bank to institute a temporary freeze on investments involving large-scale land acquisitions, like the freezes that some governments, such as those of Mozambique and Cambodia, already have in place.
h	The World Bank is a huge player on the global land scene. Its investments in agriculture have tripled in the last decade: from \$2.5bn in 2002 to \$6–8bn in 2012.
i	In the face of this unprecedented worldwide rush for land, it is crucial that influential global actors take steps to ensure that poor people are not losing out.
j	More than 30 per cent of the land in Liberia has been handed out in large-scale concessions in the past five years, often with disastrous results for local people.