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Towards a land acquisition policy in less developed countries and land governance

Motion for a recommendation
tabled by Mr Daniel DUCARME and other members of the Assembly

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This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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Acquisitions and leases of farmland in developing countries by state authorities and investment funds are sharply increasing and entail the risk of the poorest rural populations losing their title to land and other natural resources such as water. This practice is gaining momentum under the influence of the 2008 food crisis. By 2030, 120 million hectares of additional farmland will have to be found to meet the demand for foodstuffs. One of the foremost reasons for these land purchases seems to be the bid for food security, principally in China and the Arab countries. But, according to FAO, there are more transactions involving private players than government-to-government transactions, although the latter employ indirect methods in support of deals made by enterprises.

Many states claim to be seeking to ensure the food security of their own populations, by producing outside their boundaries foods and primary agricultural products for their livestock farms in order to boost their self-sufficiency in energy. According to estimates, 15-20 million hectares have been traded over the last three years, essentially in Africa.

Hunger is a major cause of mortality and is chiefly linked with the difficulties of access to land. The economic and financial crisis could force some 100 million more people into a situation of chronic hunger when one billion people are already hungry, that is 15% of the world population. Besides, access to natural resources, land and water is part of fundamental rights. What is more, the acquisition of land can also cause irreparable damage if local populations are excluded from decisions and their land rights are not protected, as indicated in the June 2009 report of FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) *"Land grab or development opportunity?".*

FAO advocates reinforcing the global system of governance of world food security. As to the aspects of international trade which have aggravated hunger and poverty, it has stressed the need to change these. This reinforcement is also demanded by the UN-promoted Millennium Development Goals. Failing negotiated rules, farmers will risk eviction and denial of access to resources vital to their survival. S*tates' determination to ensure their food security, often at little cost, the action of speculator groups to maximise their profits at a time of severe economic and financial crisis, and uncontrolled land acquisition on a worldwide scale may spell doom for small agricultural holdings and for rural means of subsistence in poorer regions of the world.*

Forward acquisition of arable land can generate social and political risks of conflicts, exclusion, growth of inequalities, risks of imperilling food security, ecological hazards and disappearance of family production structures. Vigilance and control of this practice are therefore necessary.

The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the governments of non-member states consider which are the requisite measures for adopting specific directives on good land governance, agrarian investments and preservation of food security in the less developed countries.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

DUCARME Daniel, Belgium
AZPIAZU Pedro, Spain, ALDE
DALGAARD Per, Denmark, EDG
FRÉCON Jean-Claude, France, SOC
HUSS Jean, Luxembourg, SOC
IVANOV Stanislav, Bulgaria, EPP/CD
JOHN-CALAME Francine, Switzerland, SOC
KOÇ Haluk, Turkey, SOC
KORKEAOJA Juha, Finland, ALDE
LIPIŃSKI Dariusz, Poland, EPP/CD
MENDES BOTA José, Portugal, EPP/CD
NENKOV Aleksandar, Bulgaria, EPP/CD
O'HARA Edward, United Kingdom
RODRÍGUEZ BARAHONA Teresa, Spain, SOC
STEENBLOCK Rainder, Germany

1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democrat Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group