

The New African Land Grab

OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES	GRADES
<p>The majority of African lands, an estimated 90%, operate under customary agreements rather than codified land rights laws. Local and national African governments in recent years (especially since 2010) have been selling lands to foreign countries and multinational corporations for profit and the promise of increased productivity and employment.</p> <p>Foreign nations are purchasing lands because of their limited opportunity for agricultural expansion to feed their growing populations. However, this jeopardizes food sovereignty for many Africans and forces reliance on what multi-national corporations produce.</p> <p>This lesson examines the new African land grab and also examines the similarities of these purchases to colonization. Some knowledge of African colonization as well as the global food crisis is assumed.</p> <p><i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use maps to locate regions of potential food shortage and areas of potential agricultural expansion • Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of foreign investment in African farmlands • Describe similarities and differences of the modern African land grab to the colonization of Africa. • Identify potential solutions of the African Land Grab for Africans. 	9 th
	TIME
	2 classes
	REQUIRED MATERIALS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Computer Internet access with projector ✓ Computer Internet access for students ✓ Handouts: “Investigation: The New African Land Grab”; “REFLECTION” ✓ URLs needed for this lesson (annotated in Website Resources):
	<i>Maps</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Feeding the World http://storymaps.esri.com/stories/feedingtheworld/ ✓ “[Africa],” 1908 http://www.loc.gov/item/87692282/ ✓ Map of African Land Grab Deals http://www.thissierraleone.com/a-new-report-exposes-french-tycoons-land-grab-in-sierra-leone/
	<i>Articles</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ “Stop selling off African land—invest in farmers instead” http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/jan/23/land-deals-africa-farming-investment ✓ “Outsourcing’s Third Wave” http://www.economist.com/node/13692889. ✓ “Africa Succumbs to Colonial-style Land Grab” http://www.channel4.com/news/africa-succumbs-to-colonial-style-land-grab.
	<i>Videos</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ “Land Grab in Africa Neo-colonialism” http://www.stopafricallandgrab.com/

MINNESOTA SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS & BENCHMARKS

Standard 4. People construct regions to identify, organize and interpret areas of the earth’s surface, which simplifies the earth’s complexity.

9.3.2.4.4 Describe patterns of production and consumption of agricultural commodities that are traded among nations.

Standard 8. Processes of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of the earth's surface.

9.3.3.8.1 Define the concepts of nationalism and sovereign political states and explain how sovereignty is impacted by international agreements.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

Opening (10 minutes)

Use the maps located at <http://storymaps.esri.com/stories/feedingtheworld/>. You may choose to have students play with these maps on personal devices; however, they often take a long time to load and may not work on all devices. Click the "Closing Yield Gaps" map comparison (#2) on the right. Slide the glider back and forth.

Explore with students what regions have high yield (dark green) and low potential to increase productivity (white/tan) and which have low yield (light green) and high potential to increase productivity (dark brown). Pay particular attention to China, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, India, and Europe in comparison to sub-Saharan Africa and Central America. Pose the questions: Which regions will most likely need more sources of food to feed their populations? What countries might not have enough agricultural land to feed their growing population? Where might they try to grow food outside of their own country? What arguments could be made to support or deny investment in agricultural lands?

Development (30 minutes Day One, 30 minutes Day Two)

Distribute "The New African Land Grab" Investigation for students to complete in pairs or small groups. Students should move between the maps, video, and articles (or the video may be displayed and the maps and articles printed) to complete the handout.

The teacher circulates throughout the class checking in with students. Students may need particular help with the critical thinking questions. In responding to the MAPS section, it is worth reminding students that Africans were colonized for many reasons, but one of the main goals was access to resources such as minerals and plants (like rubber). It is recommended that students progress in the order listed on the handout. (Don't let them "divide and conquer".) Students should complete video notes and map reading on Day One. Day Two should mainly be spent reading the article(s) and making research notes. Extra videos and an article are listed at the end of the handout (and Website Resource) for students who work quickly.

Closing (15 minutes Day Two)

Post the five images or quotes throughout the room. Allow students to briefly look at the postings and then move to the one that resonates the most with them. The teacher asks students questions about their responses to the images and quotes.

1. "A farmer who has sold his land is like a soldier who has sold his weapon." (Quote from Joseph C. Vedji, Benin, farmer, at "Land Grab in Africa Neo-colonialism" video)
2. Image of colonial Africa from the Library of Congress located at: <http://www.loc.gov/item/87692282/>

3. “When they first came they told us an investor was coming and we would develop the land alongside one another. They didn’t say the land would be taken away from us entirely.” (Quote Gemechu Garbaba, farmer, at <http://www.channel4.com/news/africa-succumbs-to-colonial-style-land-grab>)
4. Image from ESRI’s Feeding the World map (displayed on LCD projector) at <http://storymaps.esri.com/stories/feedingtheworld/>
5. “Here we are creating employment, food, wealth—isn't that what Adam Smith spoke about—isn't that the reason the West is self sufficient? I don't think creating wealth is a crime.” (Quote from Sai Ramakrishna, Karuturi Global Managing Director, at <http://www.channel4.com/news/africa-succumbs-to-colonial-style-land-grab>)

Students finish their Investigation by reflecting briefly on the discussion and materials by writing approximately a half page response or creating a poster using “REFLECTION”.

Extensions

1. Students who finish early or need greater challenge have options for further research listed on the handout. There is also an hour-long documentary made by Why Poverty?, which is a group seeking to raise awareness about poverty who created eight documentaries on global poverty issues. Students watch the video, “Land Rush—Why Poverty?”, about the African Land Grab at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_pKnP-2m0Q. All the videos may be accessed at their website at <http://www.whypoverty.net/> or through PBS at <http://video.pbs.org/program/why-poverty/>
2. Students complete a geographic inquiry by focusing on one African country and the investment by foreign countries in farmland.
3. What might happen if African farmers lose land sovereignty and African people lose food sovereignty? Students create a cross-impact matrix and write a summary document answering the question.

Assessment

- “Investigation: The New African Land Grab” handout
- “REFLECTION” handout
- Class Discussions

Website Resources

Maps

“Feeding the World: Can global crop production meet future demands?” from ESRI
<http://storymaps.esri.com/stories/feedingtheworld/>

These maps feature a slider that allows you to compare important factors involved in food production including current yields, potential yield increases, irrigation, and changing crop use and diet.

“[Africa],” 1908 from The Library of Congress
<http://www.loc.gov/item/87692282/>

This map shows the European colonial divisions and independent nations of Africa in 1908.

Map of African Land Grab Deals from “A New Report Exposes French Tycoon’s Land Grab In Sierra Leone” at This is Sierra Leone

<http://www.thisissierraleone.com/a-new-report-exposes-french-tycoons-land-grab-in-sierra-leone/>
 This article includes a map of the regions where land agreements have been made, including information on the buyers as well as what the land is being used for.

“REPORT—Africa: Up for grabs—The scale and impact of land grabbing for agrofuels” from Friends of the Earth, Europe

https://www.foeeurope.org/agrofuels/FoEE_Africa_up_for_grabs_2010.pdf

The report contains the map of the regions where land agreements have been made and a chart of selected investors in African countries. The Executive Summary provides a summary of the extent of the problem and recommendations for actions. The report also provides an explanation of topics including: what is happening, who is involved and why, the crops, and the impacts of land grabbing.

Articles

“Stop selling off African land—invest in farmers instead” from The Guardian

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/jan/23/land-deals-africa-farming-investment>

This short article on the African land grab describes why the land grab is happening and highlights consequences as well as potential solutions.

"Outsourcing's Third Wave" from The Economist, May 2009

<http://www.economist.com/node/13692889>.

The writing of this article is more technical, but it provides terrific background information about deals that have been made and questions whether foreign investment is beneficial or a new brand of colonialism.

"Africa Succumbs to Colonial-Style Land Grab" by Jonathan Rugman from Channel 4 News, January 2012

<http://www.channel4.com/news/africa-succumbs-to-colonial-style-land-grab>

This brief article includes several excellent quotes representing both farmers and developers that are used in the discussion activity at the end of the lesson.

Videos

“Land Grab in Africa Neo-colonialism” from Stop Africa Land Grab

<http://www.stopafricalandgrab.com/>

This video describes reasons for foreign investment and interviews local critics. The website also has a tremendous amount of information and links to other resources on this topic.

Name: _____ Partner(s): _____

Investigation: The New African Land Grab

Look up and DEFINE the following terms in your own words:

Food sovereignty - _____

Neocolonialism - _____

VIDEO

Go to <http://www.stopafricalandgrab.com/>, scroll down and click on the video titled “Land Grabs in Africa Neo-colonialism.” Watch the video, pause and replay as many times as needed.

COMPARE how business owners and critics view the land grab [in minute 1].

IDENTIFY: Why are Jeanne Zoundjihékpon and other critics skeptical about leasing the land to foreigners? (She states three reasons).

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

SUMMARIZE: What factors are driving the land grabs in African countries? [Minutes 5:30 - 9:45]

EXPLAIN: What benefits may happen from investment in agriculture? [Minutes 10 - 11:20]

MAPS

Go to <http://www.thissierraleone.com/a-new-report-exposes-french-tycoons-land-grab-in-sierra-leone/> and scroll down to Map of African Land Grab Deals.

List countries buying African land: _____

List three reasons land is being bought. (What are buyers hoping to grow/produce?)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Go to <http://www.loc.gov/item/87692282/>. Click “enlarge” to view the map.

MAP READING: List countries that colonized African people at this time:

CRITICAL THINKING: Given what you have learned in the video and the comparison of these maps, why are some people comparing this land grab to African colonization? Give at least two reasons. (Use data from the maps to draw conclusions.)

COMPARE: Are there any differences between the African Land Grab and African colonization? Explain.

ARTICLE

Read the article “Stop selling off African land—invest in farmers instead” at <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/jan/23/land-deals-africa-farming-investment> and take notes on the following:

SUMMARIZE the tension between local farmers and governments of African states over how land is being used.

IDENTIFY: What are the impacts of the commercialization of farming?

INFER: What might happen if African farmers lose land sovereignty and African people lose food sovereignty?

IDENTIFY: What are some solutions the article listed?

IF YOU FINISH EARLY...

You may select from the following options (choose ONE). Record your findings below.

1. Watch the other videos on <http://www.stopafricanlandgrab.com/> and make note of the reasons for the land grab and the consequences.
2. Read the article “Outsourcing’s third wave” from The Economist located at: <http://www.economist.com/node/13692889>. Summarize and respond to the question: Is this beneficial foreign investment or neocolonialism?
3. Conduct your own research to find more solutions to the African Land Grab.
4. Select an African nation that has sold lands to a foreign nation and research the consequences more deeply. (You can use the “green map” to find nations who have sold lands.)

REFLECTION

Please consider the maps, video, article, and discussion and respond to ONE of the following prompts below:

1. Create a cartoon or poster aimed at informing others about the situation facing Africans and African farmers from foreigners buying up land.
2. Do you believe this African Land Grab is a new kind of colonialism? Explain using evidence you have collected from the investigation.