Aug 22, 2011

Today, the People’s Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS) launches the report of International Fact Finding Mission (IFFM) in San Mariano, Isabela, investigating whether the patterns of intensified land grabbing in the region are related to the development of the largest agrofuel project in the country by the Japanese-Filipino consortium Green Future Innovations Inc. (GFII). The IFFM was conducted by the PCFS and IBON International, in collaboration with the Asian Peasant Coalition and Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, upon the request of the local organization of small-scale farmers, Danggayan Dagiti Mannalon ti Isabela, with the support of Action Solidarité Tiers Monde. Entitled “Not One Idle Hectare: Agrofuel Development Sparks Intensified Land Grabbing in Isabela, Philippines”, the report reveals that after only acquiring 3,000 hectares of land, the agrofuel project is already exacerbating land grabbing conflicts and socio-economic inequities as well as undermining food self-sufficiency by:

- advancing claims that lands rightfully cultivated by peasants and recognized as indigenous peoples’ ancestral territories are available for conversion into sugar cane plantations;
- engaging in non-transparent lease negotiations that result in lands being grabbed from the people who till the soil;
- promoting flagrant violations of contractual commitments under the Socialized Industrial Forestry Management Agreements by facilitating the growing of sugar cane on these lands;

- leasing land from peasants through exploitative contracts which offer compensation at a substantially lower rate than would be earned if they continued to cultivate the land and sell their produce of rice, corn and bananas at local markets;
- threatening the food security and the livelihoods of farm workers who are now planting sugar cane under highly exploitative conditions; and
- aggravating environmental devastation and destroying the natural climate change mitigation capacities of local ecosystems

Based on the assessed ecological impact, the IFFM also finds it is highly questionable that the

Japanese proponents of the project, ITOCHU Corporation and the JGC Group, would be seeking additional funding through the carbon credit mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Further investigative research and support on this issue is being offered by the Brussels-based CDM Watch, and other environmental watchdog organizations, while members of the San Mariano community are still awaiting an invitation by the proponent companies for a genuine stakeholder consultation as required by the UNFCCC process as well as by national and international law. An application for recognition as a Clean Development Mechanism project was submitted for prior consideration under the UNFCCC in April 2011.

The online petition campaign launched by the IFFM has been successful in applying pressure to the companies involved in the GFII consortium, elected government officials and responsible government agencies to seriously take account of the livelihood concerns of the subsistence farming communities and Agta indigenous people of San Mariano. Seven hundred and fifty people signed from sixty two countries, representing 275 organizations.

Following the release of the IFFM’s preliminary findings in June 2011, elected representatives of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines committed to support a public consultation in San Mariano with the affected communities and to convene a discussion on the IFFM results between the Departments of Agrarian Reform, Agriculture and Environment and Natural Resources. Officials from these agencies.

- Hon. Proceso J. Alcala, Secretary, Department of Agriculture
- Atty. Virgilio R. Delos Reyes, Secretary, Department of Agrarian Reform
- Hon. Ramon Jesus P. Paje, Secretary, Department of Environment and Natural Resources
- Hon. Mark Mendoza, Chairperson, Committee on Agriculture and Food, House of Representatives
- Hon. Rafael Mariano, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and Food, House of Representatives
- Hon. Pryde Teves, Chairperson, Committee on Agrarian Reform, House of Representatives
- Hon. Francisco Matugas, Chairperson, Committee on Natural Resources, House of Representatives
- Hon. Rene Relampagos, Chairperson, Committee on Human Rights, House of Representatives
- Hon. Francis Escudero, Chairperson, Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights
- Hon. Francis Pangilinan, Chairperson, Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food
- Hon. Gregorio B. Honasan, Chairperson, Senate Committee on Agrarian Reform
- Hon. Juan Miguel F. Zubiri, Chairperson, Senate Committee on Environment & Natural Resources

- Atty. Roque Agton, Chairperson, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
- Governor Faustino Dy III, Province of Isabela
- Mayor Edgar Go, Municipality of San Mariano, Isabela
- President & CEO Gilda E. Pico, Land Bank of the Philippines
- Philippine Clean Development Mechanism Designated National Authority, Department of Environment and Natural Resources
- Green Future Innovations, Inc.
- Ecofuel Land Development, Inc

And internationally to the following corporations and institutional representatives:

- ITOCHU Corporation, Tokyo, Japan
- JGC Corporation, Yokohama, Japan
- Mr. Olivier de Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food
- Mr. Anand Grover, UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
- Ms. Raquel Rolnik, UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context

- Mr. James Anaya, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Dr Jacques Diouf, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)
- Hiroyuki Konuma, FAO Regional Asia Pacific Office
- Paul Munro Faure Paul, Principal Officer; Climate, Energy and Tenure Division (NRC), FAO

The People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty, IBON International, the Asian Peasant Coalition, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, Danggayan Dagiti Mannalon ti Isabela and all seven hundred and fifty signatories of the petition continue to await an adequate response and action from implicated authorities and personnel.

For more information please contact: secretariat at foodsov.org ; apcsecretariat at asianpeasant.org ; troberts at ibon.org