



Mr. Akinwumi Adesina  
President, African Development Bank  
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Côte d'Ivoire

Via email:

CC:

Ousmane Dore, Director of Central Africa Region  
Donatien Akoupo Kouassi, DRC Officer-in-Charge  
Jennifer Blanke, Vice President Agriculture, Human and Social Development  
Pierre Guislain, Vice President Private Sector, Infrastructure and Industrialization

June 5, 2019

**RE: CALL TO END SUPPORT TO AGRO-INDUSTRIAL PARKS IN THE DRC**

Dear Mr. Adesina,

We are writing to call on you to end the promotion of agro-industrial parks in DRC by the African Development Bank. The parks, based on an ill-conceived model, will have devastating consequences on local communities and fail to deliver development outcomes.

The AfDB is a key driver and financier of DRC's plan to establish 22 agro-industrial parks over 1.5 million hectares. Through its provision of [US\\$ 1 million](#) for [feasibility studies](#), the AfDB is explicitly encouraging DRC to prioritize industrial plantations over family farmers, even though it contradicts the country's own [agricultural policy](#), which aims to support farmers.

The Oakland Institute's recent report [The Bukanga Lonzo Debacle](#) details the devastating consequences of the agro-industrial park pilot project. This Public Private Partnership between the South African company Africom and the Congolese government received significant technical and financial support from both the World Bank and the AfDB. The report exposes the utter failure of the park and documents how nine villages were misled into signing away their ancestral lands.

The AfDB has previously [claimed](#) that the land acquisition for the park was achieved through [legal means](#) and that the local communities were "[unanimous](#)" in accepting the park on their land. However, [numerous testimonies collected](#) from the villagers report forced displacement as well as many incidents of police violence against the

locals, allegedly ending in one death. A leaked [audit](#) of the project performed by Ernest & Young reveals a damning picture of its design and management and raises suspicions of embezzlement and corruption. Facilities and services, such as schools, clinics, water, and electricity, promised by Africom never materialized, and the uncontrolled use of harmful chemicals led to pollution of surrounding rivers used by the locals for drinking and bathing.

Despite the failure of the Bukanga Lonzo agro-industrial pilot project, the government [plans](#) to proceed with 21 more parks in the country. This plan, supported and encouraged by the AfDB, is against the expressed wishes of farmers and their organizations, who have [called](#) for the end of agro-industrial parks and similar projects. NGOs and religious organizations have joined farmer groups to [reject](#) the agro-industrial park model. In May 2019, 19 Congolese civil society organizations, including farmer organizations, religious, as well as human rights and environmental groups have released [a joint declaration](#) calling on the World Bank and the AfDB to immediately end their promotion of agro-industrial parks and to instead support family farmers in DRC.

Much can be done to support farmers produce and get adequate income for their crops. Mislabeled as ‘subsistence farmers,’ most DRC peasants are entrepreneurs who do generate income from the sale of their crops. However, they need support to access basic services, inputs, and credit, as well as improved ways to store, transport and sell their products. Instead of dispossessing them of their land and establishing industrial production that leaves them behind, there are other avenues for private investment to meet these needs. Institutional mechanisms, public policies, and investments should all focus on providing such sustained support to the agricultural sector.

Joining Congolese organizations, we therefore call on the African Development Bank to immediately end its support of agro-industrial parks and to instead support family farmers. This is the only way to tackle hunger and poverty in a sustainable and effective way, in DRC as well as in the rest of Africa.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and await your response.

Sincerely,

Anuradha Mittal, Executive Director, The Oakland Institute  
Henk Hobbelink, Coordinator, Grain  
Olivier Hauglustaine, General Secretary, SOS Faim  
Hannah Mowat, Campaign Coordinator, Fern  
Fr. Aniedi Okure, OP, Executive Director, Africa Faith & Justice Network  
Véronique Wemaere, Director, Solsoc  
François Cornet, Director, Caritas International  
Vincent Henin, Louvain-Coopération  
Pierre Collière, Eclasio  
Julie Berthelier, ULB Coopération