

# Senegalese villagers vow to fight biofuels project

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A farmer in northern Senegal rakes his field in 2004. Villagers from northern Senegal vowed Thursday to fight a project by Senegalese and Italian investors to produce biofuels on their land, a venture already forced to relocate once by deadly protests.

Villagers from northern Senegal vowed Thursday to fight a project by Senegalese and Italian investors to produce biofuels on their land, a venture already forced to relocate once by deadly protests.

"We will fight those who want to take our land. It is the land of our ancestors, an area of 26,000 hectares which houses villages, thousands of heads of cattle, mosques, cemeteries," Oumar Ba, a representative of a collective of affected villages, told journalists.

"Whoever wants to take our land will first walk over our dead bodies," said Ba, who lives in the village of Ndiael in the region of the same name.

The Senegalese-Italian company Senethanol/Senhuile had recently announced it was moving the project from the village of Fanaye, where violent protests in October 2011 left two people dead, leading government to suspend the venture.

Senethanol/Senhuile wants to grow [sweet potatoes](#) for the production of biofuels, a [renewable energy source](#) which has soared in popularity as oil prices rise and concerns grow over emissions from traditional fuels.

The United States and Brazil are the biggest producers, but investors have been criticised for buying up large swathes of land in Africa to produce fuel to be exported to their nations.

Senethanol/Senhuile has denied its project is an example of land-grabbing, and last year described it as "an unquestionable interest in the improvement of the economic and [social situation](#) of the villages concerned and all Senegalese."

But the organisation is again encountering resistance at its new project site.

"The case of Fanaye must serve as a lesson to authorities," said Marieme Sow of the NGO Enda Pronat, who denounced "land-grabbing in Senegal by multi-nationals."

"We are making this appeal for government to realise that 60 percent of the population of this country is made up of farmers who need this land."

Senegalese rap group "Bidew Bou Bess" (New Star in the Wolof language) presented a song called "Don't Touch My Land" to journalists.

"Let's block the road to those who want to plunder our land. Let's stop those who tear up our land. They want our land for profit. They are colonising us, they are using us," the song said.

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