



OXFAM

BEHIND THE BRANDS

SUGAR AND LAND



COMPANIES

1. How does Oxfam reach its score for the companies on land in the Behind the Brands scorecard?

Scores on land are based on the acknowledgements that companies have made public about land issues and the rights of communities, as well as their published policies and supplier requirements on land. The scores also capture commitments companies have made on issues such as deforestation which have significant impact on land use.

2. Should we expect companies to know exactly what is happening in their supply chains?

Companies have already shown that they can tackle issues inside their supply chains, such as child labour and forced labour. We believe it's absolutely reasonable for them to tackle issues like land grabs and land disputes, too. These are big sophisticated powerful companies that can track down minute details in their supply chains – if they choose to.

Several companies have endorsed common standards such as the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which call on companies to do due diligence to assess and prevent rights violations that they cause or contribute to. There are some costs associated with due diligence and prevention but there are also significant costs that come with a failure to address these issues – including the cost to the company's reputation and sales.



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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

3. Isn't corn syrup replacing sugar in many soft drinks – particularly in the US? Does Oxfam think this is the solution to the pressure on sugar?

Simply swapping sugar with corn syrup isn't going to stop land grabs. In fact, that's just as likely to bring other unintended bad consequences on poor communities. The fact is, sugar is just one of the foods along with soy and palm oil putting massive pressure on land and causing land disputes. What's needed is for companies trading in these commodities to strengthen their policies to ensure they respect land rights throughout their supply chains.

Most soft drinks sold around the globe contain sugar. Some companies have switched certain products to high fructose corn syrup, but even in the US numerous products contain high levels of sugar.

4. What does Oxfam think about the other negative impacts of the sugar industry including high rates of obesity or the poor working conditions on plantations?

Health advocates are rightly asking tough questions about the effects of high-sugar diets – but as Oxfam we're concerned today about what this booming global sugar trade means to land and the poor communities who're now losing out. We're concerned that the sugar trade needs to benefit local farmers – not hurt them. We will continue to raise these issues and advocate for a solution in our own work and by supporting the efforts of allies such as the Access to Nutrition Index (a global initiative that evaluates food and beverage manufacturers on their policies, practices, and performance related to obesity and under nutrition).

5. What are you asking the companies to do about the cases you highlight?

We want the companies to investigate their links to these cases and help to ensure that the appropriate parties (governments or their suppliers) seek a fair resolution for the people involved. Oxfam is supporting allies in seeking these resolutions at the local level. Companies must also do more to prevent these situations occurring in the first place, and that is the primary aim of our campaign.



Guarani Kaiowá women observe an area recently cleared for plantations - Taquara Indigenous Land, Caarapó Municipality, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. Photo: Oxfam



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LAND

6. Why are you focusing on sugar?

Many large-scale land acquisitions involve commodities that are heavily used to produce both food and biofuels, particularly sugar, soy, and palm oil. Sugar is very land intensive. Currently 31 million hectares (76 million acres) of land - the size of Italy – are used for sugar production with at least 4 million hectares (10 million acres) linked to 100 large-scale reported land deals since 2000 - though actual number of land deals could be much bigger. The demand for land to produce sugar is set to increase as global sugar consumption is predicted to rise by 25 per cent by 2020. Over half of the sugar produced globally is used by the food and drink industry which are the focus of the Behind the Brands campaign.

7. What about the drive for biofuels?

Biofuels are a major driver of large scale land investments and this can often lead to land conflicts - however they are not the only drivers and the production of soy, palm oil and sugar also have a significant role to play. Oxfam has been calling on the EU and the US to end their support for biofuels policies which encourage the production of fuel crops over food crops. Some of the biggest traders and suppliers of sugar to food and drink companies are also the biggest producers of biofuels.

8. These countries are vast – why is the pressure on land so severe it leads to land grabs?

Even in large countries most of the land – especially good arable land – is already used by local people for growing crops, grazing livestock, hunting or gathering plants for food or medicines. Responsible investment could help increase the productivity of the land and bring real benefits to both investors and communities – however a proper process need to be put in place to ensure that the benefits of land investments are shared and conflicts avoided.

9. Is Oxfam working with the communities you have highlighted to get justice – and how are you doing this?

Oxfam is working with partners in Brazil and Cambodia to support their efforts to achieve just resolution to the cases. We are also aiming to bring greater international pressure and attention to the cases through media, public campaigning and lobbying to support the goals of local groups working to gain justice.

10. What does Oxfam think the governments of Cambodia and Brazil should do on these cases?

Oxfam urges the both the Cambodian and the Brazilian governments to engage with stakeholders, including the communities and the companies involved, to resolve these disputes. Governments should hold all actors, including the companies, to account and ensure they obey national laws. They should be aware of their social responsibilities.



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Guarani-kaiowá people - Panambi-Lagoa Rica Indigenous Land, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. Photo: Oxfam

The white sign at the entrance of the community reads: "The land demarcation of Tekoha camp guarantees sovereignty and culture. Stop stalling." (The Guarani call the places they inhabit Tekoha)

CONSUMER

11. How can consumers make a difference?

Consumers can demand that companies act to prevent land grabs in their supply chains. We believe this is the most effective way of getting companies to see that the way they impact the world's poorest people is important to their business. Social media gives consumers an unprecedented opportunity to connect with these companies, and we encourage people to contact them on Twitter and Facebook, or sign an online petition to their CEO at www.behindthebrands.org.

12. Is Oxfam asking consumers to boycott products?

No. Oxfam is not calling for boycotts but we recognize consumers will make their own purchasing decisions based on the information we are publishing. We want people to contact the companies and let them know that they care about the communities in the developing world who produce their products. We believe that this is the most effective way of getting companies to see that the way they impact the world's poorest people is important to their business.

13. Is fair trade the answer?

Fair Trade certification can make a huge difference to the lives and livelihoods of small holder farmers, and can be a vital stepping stone to promoting the position of small holder farmers in supply chains. For example, Fair Trade certified smallholder tea producers in Malawi have seen a three-fold increase in their incomes. That is why Oxfam encourages people to buy Fair-trade products wherever possible. To put things into perspective, Fair Trade only represents a very small part of produce which food and beverage companies' source. That is why Oxfam is calling for companies to put in place policies which apply to all the commodities which they source.

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