The World Bank has prepared a report on massive investments into developing world agriculture, a practice shorthanded as land grabbing.

The report is due for publication next month, but leaks are already getting out, and causing a stir among Brussels' huge development activist community.

Amid the food and land bubble leading up to 2008, African land became the target of big corporations and sovereign wealth funds.

Most famously, Daewoo Logistics Corp. in 2008 was able to get a 99-year lease on a spread of land in Madagascar as big as Qatar, a deal that was later overturned after a coup.

The World Bank report criticizes land grabbing for not meshing with proper development strategies and leading to conflict.

Development advocates are up in arms about the Bank's handling of the report, which say flatly contradicts the Bank's own policy of encouraging international trade and investment. That's why the bank proposes releasing it at the height of the summer, when no one will be watching, they claim.

In a phone interview, Olivier de Schutter, a Belgian who has been UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food since 2008, explained the outrage.

"The World Bank encourages these investments," he said. "They argue it's a solution for the lack of equipment, the lack of storage facilities in the development world."

"Investment is needed," continued Mr. de Schutter, who teaches at the University of Louvain in Belgium and Columbia University. "But not investment under any conditions. You don't want to encourage or allow a market for speculators."

The arrival of big outside investors "often pushes the original land users off the land," he said. "It's an important consequence for communities who have no legal titles."

His goal, and that of other development activists, he said, is to raise awareness about the land grab issue. "The World Bank is a complex animal, it's not going to change right away."

Still, he added, "this report is embarrassing for the Bank, and that's why they're releasing it in the middle of summer."

A World Bank official said the Washington-based institution would never seek to muffle the work and findings of its researchers.