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Large-scale green grabbing for wind and solar PV development in Brazil

Michael Klingler¹, Nadia Ameli², Jamie Rickman³, and Johannes Schmidt⁴

¹University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, Institute of Sustainable Economic Development, Vienna, Austria (michael.klingler@boku.ac.at)

²Institute for Sustainable Resources, University College London, London, UK (n.ameli@ucl.ac.uk)

³Institute for Sustainable Resources, University College London, London, UK (jamie.rickman@ucl.ac.uk)

⁴University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, Institute of Sustainable Economic Development, Vienna, Austria (johannes.schmidt@boku.ac.at)

Large-scale wind and solar photovoltaic (PV) infrastructures are rapidly expanding in Brazil. These low-carbon technologies can exacerbate land struggles rooted in historical inequities in land ownership, lack of regulation and weak governance. Here, we trace how green grabbing, i.e. the large-scale appropriation and control of (undesignated) public lands, both formally legal and illicit, for the development of wind and solar PV, has developed in Brazil throughout 2000 to 2021. We find that global investors and owners, mainly from Europe, are involved in 78% of wind and 96% of solar PV parks, occupying 2,148 km² and 102 km² of land, respectively. We also show that land privatization is the prevalent land tenure regime for securing access to and control over land, indicating significant transformations of prior (undesignated) public and common land. We conclude that green grabbing is a persistent, critical phenomenon in Brazil, requiring transparency and vigilant monitoring of land claims and tenure modifications.