Don’t be Fooled by TIAA’S Greenwashing
by John Peck
Executive Director of Family Farm Defenders

“Thank You Cake” Delivered to UW-Madison Chancellor Rebecca Blank on April Fool’s Day

Besides being the manager of many WI public employee pension funds, TIAA has also been given charge of the state’s $4+ billion Eduvest fund for future college students - meaning that many young people are now unwittingly implicated in practices that drive family farmers off the land, destroy tropical forests, perpetuate dependence upon fossil fuels, and aggravate climate chaos.

When I found out that my own retirement money as a part-time college professor was being used by TIAA to gobble up 50,000 acres in Mississippi, making it harder for black farmers to survive there, and also being used for agribusiness deforestation in Brazil’s Amazon, threatening the livelihood of indigenous people, I must admit I was pretty upset,” noted John E. Peck with Family Farm Defenders, a UW-Madison graduate and one of cake deliverers. “We hope that as Chancellor Blank and her staff enjoy this delicious carrot cake with cream cheese frosting, that they will also reflect upon the Wisconsin Idea and their own leadership role as public servants in averting the demise of our planet.”

Way back in Oct.2017, the WI American Federation of Teachers (AFT) passed a resolution calling for TIAA to “Refrain from further investment and begin a process of divestment from land grabs that are known to have displaced family farmers, triggered deforestation, and aggravated climate change.” A similar resolution was passed by the UW-Madison Faculty Senate in April 2019, calling for greater transparency and accountability from TIAA for its investment decisions leading to land grabbing and forest destruction. In May 2021, TIAA announced it would take action on climate change, with a plan to achieve “Net Zero” emissions by 2050. However, over 100 organizations wrote a letter to TIAA in September 2021, calling their plan: “Too little, Too late.”

For more info on how to join this effort, visit https://www.stoplandgrabs.org/en-us/ and https://tiaa-divest.org Uprooted and Rising has also produced a great story map about the land grabbing issue, check it out here: https://www.uprootedandrising.org/slg