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Sustainable Land-Based Investments in Africa The quest for inclusion and transparency

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ABSTRACT

A common limiting factor to the development of agriculture on the continent is the amorphous land administration laws and practices which in certain locations, is dominated by traditional administration and inheritance among an ever-increasing population, leading to fragmentation of available land with little available for commercial agriculture.

Using desk reviews of previous studies, this research aimed to analyse the causative factors of ineffective land-based investments especially in agricultural production with a view to harnessing the huge potentials of land-based investments on the continent. It probed the contribution of women and the youth to the development of agriculture and the potential benefits to be derived if inputs were made available to them.

This research indicated the potential benefits of instituting contemporary reforms in land administration using frameworks such as the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the context of National Food Security* (VGGT).

Keywords: Amorphous, fragmentation, land based, reforms.

1. INTRODUCTION

The youth are the successor farming generation and quite explicably, are the future of food security not just in West Africa but indeed, Africa and the world at large!

In a global context, almost 90% of the world's 1.2 billion youth live in developing countries with young people accounting for about a quarter of the working poor. This grim statistic is particularly pronounced in Africa, where over 70% of youth subsist on less than US\$2 a day – a condition even worse in the rural areas. Therefore, a great number of rural youth who are under-employed in the informal economy as contributing family workers or as subsistence farmers and typically earn low wages and income feel compelled to migrate to the cities and urban centres (Aquino & Fonseca, 2017).

2. THE SYSTEM OF LAND ADMINISTRATION IN DIFFERENT AFRICAN COUNTRIES

2.1 Mozambique

Since after the seventeen-year civil war in Mozambique, a key national challenge continues to be the reconciliation of rural poverty reduction efforts and environmental sustainability as concerns community land tenure regularization and sustainable natural resources management. The importance of these

factors is augmented by demographic and market pressures on land and natural resources: the Mozambican population continues to grow at a relatively fast pace of 2.76% in 2012, (World Bank, 2012).

While the interests of private investors and the local population (whose rights and livelihoods are undermined by poor governance of land and natural resources) are frequently in conflict, the overall demand for land in Mozambique has increased rapidly since the 1990s, with the government granting an estimated 2.5 million hectares of land to investors in the form of concessions. According to Aquino & Fonseca (2017), similar trend can be seen in relation to other natural resources – for instance, the country loses about 140,000 hectares of forests every year, representing an annual deforestation rate of 0.23%. Although Mozambique's land legislation recognizes the rights of communities over their traditional land, these rights have not been well mapped and registered, *community land rights delimitation*, the basic process by which the boundaries of community tenure over a particular land are established in Mozambique, can strengthen communities' land tenure security for enhanced agricultural engagement.

2.2 Uganda

Land governance practices in Uganda is marked in equal measure by a contradiction between relatively progressive legislation and

partial implementation as institutions that deal with land administration and dispute resolution such as customary authority systems, local government, and special courts for land justice, are relatively weak. The position of women with respect to land and inheritance also remains weak, both legally and in practice, which undermines their livelihoods and status in society. While tenure insecurity in Uganda is a source of conflict within families and among groups in communities, other land governance issues in the country are the landlord-tenant relations, land tenure insecurity in post-conflict Northern Uganda, disputes over government expropriation of land and the implications of mineral and mining exploration for local land tenure systems and rights.

The country concluded the development of its *National Land Policy* (NLP) in August 2013, a process that saw the participation of the entire citizenry in its development. While land in the new policy is no longer viewed in terms of rights' recognition only, but also in terms of its productive capacity and as an enabler for economic empowerment and political participation (LANDac, 2017), appropriate implementation of the NLP is yet to be seen.

2.3 Ghana

The country displays a complex mix of constitutional, legislative and customary procedures and frameworks. The current land administration system is one of legal pluralism,

resulting in overlapping claims and potentially risky investments. The Ghana National Land Policy was adopted in 1999 to address a series of issues such as weak land administration, land market conflicts and the expropriation of large tracts of land by the state, combined with a lack of landowner consultation. As part of the urgency to ensure local tenure security, the government initiated the *Land Administration Project* (LAP) to demarcate, survey and document long-term (25-year) rural parcel rights in selected food basket areas that are located in Western and Ashanti regions of Ghana.

LAP aims to increase tenure security to boost agricultural investments as well as to develop a database to compile ownership characteristics such as actual farm sizes and locations, types of crops grown, and rental fees and mitigate conflicts over access between different land-owning groups, for instance, young people and youth who lack secure access to land or between smallholder farmers, women and cattle herdsmen who constantly search for new land (LANDac, 2017).

2.4 Ethiopia

Just like Kenya (Njeru & Gichimu, 2014), Ethiopia offers an interesting and pace-setting approach to land rights and management as food security and integrated water resources management are intricately linked to access to land, tenure security and collective user rights. Although significant land governance

challenges include a growing population - like in most developing countries - and increased demand for land, land fragmentation and small land holdings and pressures for the extraction of natural resources, rental markets have become veritable means to access land just as the country has made significant strides in the past few years with the registration of user rights over farmland. Even more interestingly, women's rights over land are formally recognized during registration, but with little guarantee in practice. Even with these shortcomings, appreciation is made of the country's development of an innovative approach to securing land rights, which is large-scale, fast and cost effective. However, there are limitations in the maintenance and updating of records.

2.5 Nigeria

In spite of oil and gas being the main national revenue stream, agriculture remains the base of the country's economy, providing the main source of livelihood for most of its citizens. While 70% of the national population is younger than 30, agricultural practices account for about 70% employment in the country. However, the sector faces many challenges, notably an antiquated land tenure system that constrains access to land (1.8 ha/farming household on the average), a very low level of irrigation development (less than 1% of cropped land under irrigation), limited adoption of research findings and technologies,

high cost of farm inputs, poor access to credit, inefficient fertilizer procurement and distribution, inadequate storage facilities and poor access to markets have all combined to keep agricultural productivity low (average of 1.2 metric tons of cereals/ha) with high postharvest losses and waste (FAO, 2017).

The World Bank (2012) succinctly buttressed this fact that in Africa, the main factors undermining agricultural production include reliance on rain-fed agriculture, smallholder land holding, and low productivity due to poor planting material and a weak agricultural extension system amongst other factors, leading to an annual average of \$30billion expenditure on food importation to the continent.

The case of women in agriculture is even more distressing. Women, who make up a good half of the farming workforce as well as the entire national population, often co-opted into farming by marriage, largely work as subsistence farmers, paid or unpaid seasonal workers on family farms or as entrepreneurs running on- or off-farm enterprises (FAO, 2017). In addition, women provide a greater proportion of unpaid care-givers and domestic work in rural areas, and in essence, supporting current and future generations of rural workers within communities and their households.

Despite their significant contribution to the agricultural sector and communities, rural women are typically more disadvantaged,

enduring more restricted access to productive resources and assets, financial services and social protection. Gender-biased social norms and local inheritance practices and laws also limit women's involvement in gainful work and their participation in workers' and producers' organisations, especially in organised labour institutions such as agricultural co-operatives.

3. THE WAY FORWARD

One of the most relevant frameworks, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), was developed by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in partnership with a range of international, regional and national organizations and as a result of increased global awareness on issues of land governance and food security (FAO, 2017). According to UNIDO & FAO (2008), the over-arching goals of the VGGT are centred on food security realization for all people as well as supporting 'the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security'. As a framework of principles and international best practices and standards, the VGGT also aims to provide a reference point for responsible land tenure governance for states to develop strategies, policies, legislation and programmes as well as a set of guidelines for various stakeholders to measure the actions of others. An additional international framework

discussed in the learning trajectories included the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A more effective and efficient way of engaging the youth and women in agriculture requires addressing the fundamental constraints that they face when trying to eke a living which include insufficient access to skills development and education, limited access to resources such as land and low levels of involvement in decision-making processes. Addressing these biases is a key component of sustainable development strategies. Therefore, increasing youth and rural women's access to decent employment opportunities will be critical to improving their productivity and earning power, which in turn raises family incomes and food security.

Some of the basic but foremost considerations include;

a. Development of long-term developmental plans: Agriculture should be prominently assessed in national developmental plans and strategies. Any new method of agricultural practice should also be assessed in the light of environmental sustainability using critical tools such as *strategic environmental assessment* (SEA) and *environmental impact assessment* (EIA). This way, benefits to be derived from such practices as well as impacts and mitigations to undesirable outcomes are planned in advance before they occur.

Furthermore, growth in the agriculture sector with environmental protection and long-term improvements in soil and moisture conservation and sustainability plan must be seen as a long-term persistent effort, with abundant tangible and intangible benefits.

b. Structures of landholding and landownership: Farmers should be able to buy and sell land and enjoy full entitlement of their holdings. In this way, they will have security of tenure and the possibility of using their farms as collateral for loans. With funds, they can develop the land, buy machinery or even buy more land to make mechanization viable. Larger farms should be the goal, and further fragmentation of farms should be discouraged where possible.

c. Fiscal regime: The development of commercial agriculture and the industrial enterprises associated with it need a supportive fiscal regime in which taxes are low and barriers such as import duties on agricultural machinery, spare parts and raw materials for local manufacturing - minimized.

d. Finance: Increased capitalization of agriculture needs sources of finance on favourable terms, whether from the private sector alone or from a blend of private and public capital, possibly including international donor funding. The financial sector, with agri-business intermediaries, should work with commercially-oriented farmers and entrepreneurs in order to strike the necessary

financial deals that are required for increasingly commercialized farming.

e. Education and training: Training is necessary and paramount, not only for farming skills but also for a sustainable management of the environment and farm machinery and other technologies, finance, forward planning, marketing, etc. The trainings should nevertheless be regularly updated in a process of lifelong learning.

f. Research and extension: The technology that farmers require needs to be locally sourced and adapted to local conditions in a continuous process of research, adaptation, extension, monitoring and evaluation. "Certification" of machinery is also needed in order to give relevant information to farmers and extension services on the actual performance of machinery in local conditions of use. Impartial testing for the whole range of nationally-manufactured farm equipment (such as the OECD tractor test codes) will be needed to support manufacturers in producing good quality products.

g. Input sourcing: Farmers must have local access to the inputs they need, including seeds and fertilizers, water as well as machinery and the supporting infrastructure that mechanization requires (e.g. repair services, parts supply, fuel and lubricants). While the private sector has a vital role to play in this respect in partnership with farmer organizations, governments should be encouraged to facilitate and support such

initiatives which will cut across infrastructure, education, health, transport, water resources, fiscal measures and legislation. Governments have a role in the broad field of education and training, in the creation, funding and management of institutions responsible for the acquisition of knowledge (research) and in its dissemination as well as facilitate the process of agricultural mechanization development. It should also facilitate trade relationships with new suppliers of technology or equipment as well as in maintain standards.

h. International technical institutions such as UNIDO and FAO have a role to play in bringing their expertise to bear on the problems and challenges by offering a holistic approach developed over many years in a wide range of situations such as producing an Agricultural Mechanization Strategies (AMSSs) for specific countries or regions as well as analytical tools to put the whole Agricultural Machinery Industry System (AMIS) in perspective for development purposes.

i. African policymakers need to take action to improve land governance and administration by implementing land governance frameworks: the FAO Voluntary Guidelines and the African Union Framework and Guidelines among others. Each African country is tasked with translating the FAO and African Union guidelines into binding regulations and enforceable laws at national level which must recognise customary tenure rights as real and

defensible property rights as well as appreciating its impacts on the environment.

j. To improve transparency and accountability, African governments must empower oversight institutions such as their parliaments and civil society organisations to monitor, evaluate and improve the implementation of these regulations.

4. CONCLUSION

In terms of progress made, model countries should be selected to establish and trial the needed support systems and provisions for a viable mechanization scheme. Similar progress will follow in neighbouring countries, stimulated by successes in model countries where the efforts would have been proved. In parallel with the development of commercial agriculture, the plan would engender development of agro-industries, mainly in rural communities, geared to the conversion of agricultural raw materials into marketable products and manufacturing inputs. A key element of the plan is to create a ripple effect, starting locally then widening to achieve productivity enhancement over increasingly greater areas – first on a national scale, and later on a regional scale.

As the ageing smallholder farmers in much of Africa are less likely to adopt the new technologies needed to sustainably increase agricultural productivity, there is an urgent need to engage the youth in ways that they can see a promising future in Agriculture as well as

to influence them to pursue careers in agro-based industries. This can only be achieved if fair principles for responsible agricultural investment that respects rights, livelihoods and resources are firmly adopted by governments on the continent.

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