



Tropentag, October 5-7, 2011, Bonn

“Development on the margin”

Participation of the Local Population in the Context of Large-scale Land Acquisitions and Leases

NIKE AFFELD, TANJA PICKARDT

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Sector Project Land Policy and Land Management, Germany

Abstract

In the last years, there has been a rising trend in what international headlines have termed 'land grabbing'. International and national investors (private, parastatal and state companies, sovereign wealth funds) are using long-term leases or purchase agreements to secure large areas of agricultural land in developing countries in order to grow food or energy plants for export or domestic consumption. In the aftermath of the financial crisis and in anticipation of further rises in agricultural prices, land is increasingly becoming a speculative asset for investors. According to the International Land Coalition, reported cases currently total at least 80 million hectares - more than double the size of Germany.

On the one hand, large-scale land acquisitions pose considerable risks, such as the violation of human rights or the loss of adequate access to land for the local population. On the other hand, they offer chances (increased tax income, improved infrastructure, supply of capital and technology etc.) which can be realised if strict conditions are met. In this regard, an international policy dialogue and a dialogue with the partner countries of development cooperation is needed, as well as improved transparency of investments and capacity building for professionals, amongst others.

One of the most common shortcomings of investments in land is insufficient participation of the local population in decision-making, negotiation and implementation of projects. This is often attributable to information asymmetry and power imbalances between the investor and the government on the one hand and the population on the other hand, corruption and patronage within governments of target countries and an unclear land rights situation.

GIZ supports around 30 projects on land policy and land management worldwide. Participatory land use planning and inclusive business models will be presented as two of GIZ's approaches for improving participation of the local population in the context of large-scale land acquisitions and leases.

Keywords: Land grabbing, land management, land use