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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Identifying Gainers and Losers When Land Prices Change under Large-Scale Land Acquisitions in Ghana

ELIAS DANYI KUUSAANA

University of Bonn, Center for Development Research (ZEF), Economic and Technological Change, Germany

Abstract

Recent renewed investment in agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa is very welcoming since it presents opportunities to augment the comparatively lagging food supply in the region. However, large land acquisition for agro-investment globally is stirring debate about their political, social, cultural, economic and ecological implications on smallholders and host communities. Though several works are on-going in this area, empirical findings that identified and compared losers and gainers in host communities as changes in land prices occur remains limited. This study was largely qualitative - relying on household surveys, focus group discussions and key stakeholder interviews. The study found that inequalities in benefiting from land revenue were customarily anchored and existing land and agricultural policies offered very little remedies for vulnerable groups. Unequal power relations between land custodians and clustered land users dictated who could benefit more from price changes. Chiefs and family heads entrusted with allodial titles were found to be gaining most from land price changes. On the other hand, sharecroppers, women and poor community commoners were the most hit by changing land prices. Policy direction should target spreading land transaction proceeds to the entire community in the form of community infrastructure and social services. Under the current tenure regime, land custodians are not obliged to earmark land transaction proceeds for community development or compensate expropriated households. Though the proponents of large agro-investments in Africa have argued that boosting agriculture will generate foreign currency, create employment and improve agricultural modernisation and productivity, such notions have not fully manifested in host communities as the investment agreements hardly assign such obligations. These targets are however realisable if effective legal and institutional frameworks are put in place.

Keywords: Chieftaincy, gainers/losers, Ghana, land investments, land markets, land prices