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Impact of Large-Scale Land Holdings on Fulani Pastoralists' Livelihoods in Agogo Traditional Area of Ghana

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Introduction

Limited access to adequate and secure land is a major problem for sustainable agricultural production in Africa especially for smallholders, migrant farmers and pastoralists. This has been heightened by the commoditisation, commercialisation, competition and high demand for land by other stakeholders (Flintan, 2012). Generally, land markets move land tenure from communal towards individualised rights (Besley, 1995). The individualization of land rights, however, limits land access to vulnerable groups including smallholders, pastoralists, migrant groups and women and thereby creates tensions and conflicts especially between pastoralists and smallholders. Flintan (2012) also maintains that smallholders and pastoralists always suffer land tenure insecurity in times of agricultural diversification and expansion, conflicts and land grabbing. Evidence have shown in other places in Africa that large-scale land transactions led to the loss of land rights of smallholders and other groups including pastoralists (see Deininger and Byerlee, 2011; Deininger, 2003). These include demand for land for non-food items by countries (such as China) without production capacity especially for teak, cotton and rubber as well as food crops such as coffee in Ethiopia, tea in Kenya, sugar cane in Zambia, soybeans in Tanzania, jatropha in Ghana, eucalyptus in Mozambique and rice in Mali.

Importantly, land is gaining economic value in Ghana as there are increased investments in its usage for commercial, housing and agricultural purposes due to demographic pressures and increased agriculture (see Yaro, 2010). The Agogo Traditional Area of the Asante Akim North District is one area that has witnessed increased interest in land acquisition in Ghana. The area has attracted investments in large-scale land transactions by agro companies including ScanFarm and other tree plantation companies. Smallholder farmers are also seeing value in agriculture and are making strides to increase their production by acquiring more land run through common property management. At the same time, more cattle owners and Fulani pastoralists have acquired land for cattle rearing due to the favourable climatic conditions and availability of resources. These investments in land have led to competitions for land and other resources and have increased land tenure insecurity for minority groups including pastoralists over access and use of land. Tsikata and Yaro (2013) have already noted that transnational land transactions have caused conflicts among farmers and pastoralists and led to potential loss of arable land by smallholders in Ghana.

Since ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd land acquisition in 2008 in the Agogo area, other actors including Fulani pastoralists' livelihoods have been negatively affected. As the pastoralists continually have limited access to land and crops are grown on pasture lands and paths, there is increased destruction of crops by cattle leading to violent conflicts with farmers. Besides, pastoralists face high tenure insecurity as farmers and land owners seized their leased lands and are reacquired by agro companies which affect resources for pastoralists' cattle. Grazing Lands in areas like Dukusen, Bebome, Abrawapong and Afrisire, hitherto acquired by Fulani pastoralists for their cattle were confiscated and now turned into farms and plantations making it difficult to get land for grazing pasture. In 2012 and 2013, conflicts between ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd and pastoralists over the destruction of the company's crops raised further issues about land acquisition in the area. The study examines the impacts of large-scale land holdings on Fulani pastoralists' livelihoods in Agogo. It makes a comparison of pastoralists land acquisitions and land acquisitions of ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd, Nicol-Miro Plantation Ltd (Bunfuom Plantation Ltd) and Bernard Kojo Ofori Teak Plantation Ltd.

Material and Methods

This study is based on primary field data carried out in the Asante Akim North District (AANDA, located in Southern Ghana in the Ashanti Region). The capital of the AANDA is Agogo which is located in the eastern part of the Ashanti Region, geographically classified as southern Ghana. The district covers a total land area of 1125.69 sq. km. Based on the 2010 Ghana Housing and Population Census, the population of the AANDA is 68,186 representing 1.4 percent of the region's total population. Males constitute 48.8 percent whilst females represent 51.2 percent. The AANDA has a wet semi-equatorial climate and experiences a double-maxima rainfall, ranging between 1250 mm and 1750 mm per annum from May to July and from September to November. With a double-maxima rainfall, climatic conditions and resources in the area such as fertile land, pasture and water available the entire year, migrant farmers mainly from northern Ghana and pastoralists, both within and out Ghana, are regularly attracted to the area especially in the dry season in northern Ghana and the Sahalian countries.

The data presented in this paper was collected from June to September 2013 and January to February 2014. The study is qualitative in nature and based on ethnographic research that included interviews, participant observations and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving officials of ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd, farmers, officials of Nicol-Miro Forestry Ltd (formerly Bunfuom Teak Plantation Ltd), Bernard Kojo Offori Teak Plantation Ltd, Fulani pastoralists, cattle owners, chiefs, community members and officials of the Land Commission purposefully sampled. A total of 137 interviews and two FGDs were conducted.

Results and Discussion

ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd land acquisition

ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd land acquisition is a classic case of a multi-national land transaction deal with the Agogo Traditional Council (ATC). ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd formally called ScanFuel (Gh) Ltd is a Norwegian company which came to Ghana in 2008 to obtain about 400,000ha¹ of 'idle' and 'underutilised' farmland from the *Omanhene* (paramount chief) of Agogo for the commercial production of jatropha for biofuel production. However, after completing the negotiations, 19,058ha was granted through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). In 2010, ScanFarm's concession was further reduced to 13,058ha after 6,000ha was ceded to Bernard Offori – a usufruct titleholder. ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd since 2009, diverted into maize production, soybeans, sorghum, and with plans to add upland rice production and teak. The company's lease under registration with the Lands Commission is for 50years² in two streams of 25years each. A lump sum of \$23,000³ was paid through the Agogo Traditional Council (ATC) for the land, subject to annual ground rent payment of \$1 per acre per annum with an annual upward review by \$0.50 and to a maximum of \$3.50 in 2014.

Land acquisitions by tree plantation companies

Following the demand of trees especially teak by foreign owned companies (especially from China), many individuals and foreign investors have established forest/tree plantations. Most of these companies are usufruct land title owners and work in close partnership with the Ghana Forestry Commission. Bernard Kojo Offori Teak Plantation Ltd was formed in 2008 after it acquired 6,000ha of land around Dukusen and Affrisie primarily for teak plantation. This is one of the many local plantation companies and cultivates teak trees on all its acquired land with future plans to acquire more to expand to other villages in the area. Nicol-Miro Forestry Ltd (formerly known as Bunfuom Teak Plantation Ltd) was established in 2008. It is a joint South African and British venture. The company works in the Boumfum forest reserve and works in close cooperation with the district forestry office. The percentage share after harvesting of the trees is

¹This amount of money was hugely reported by the media and variously described as land grabbing by foreigners accompanied by displacements and evictions with no compensation. However, on the ground, this planned acquisition never materialized. Earlier upheavals against agro-investments were largely due to these sensationalized reporting by the media and spearheaded by some few but prominent groups. See <http://bit.ly/1a3Kpg2> and <http://bit.ly/9dZ09p>

²According to Article 266 (4) of the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana, no interest in, or right over, any land shall be created which vests in a person who is not a citizen of Ghana leasehold for a term of more than fifty years at any time. It is also generally the rule that agricultural leases should not exceed 50yrs at any time.

³Implying an average of \$1.75 per ha based on the lump sum payment and the size of plot that was rented-out. This figure is not different from reported averages of \$1 to \$ 2 per ha of agricultural land rentals globally.

90% -10% in favour of the developer (company). The company currently has 60 compartments and the total allocated land is 5,002.28ha. Only 1, 467.62ha is currently planted.

Pastoralists land acquisitions in Agogo

Fulani first land acquisition in the Agogo area was in 2006 following formal agreements between four cattle owners (2 Ghanaian and 2 Fulani) and ATC to lease out lands to these cattle owners. After these formal agreements were concluded, the operations of the four cattle owners also saw the migration of other nomadic pastoralists to the area. These nomadic pastoralists, mostly Fulani did not have any formal agreements with the ATC, but entered into informal land arrangements with other usufruct landowners. As a result, competition for space among the different resource users increased considerably. It was this same period that ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd, tree plantation companies as well as other migrant farmers and locals interested in farming got attracted by abundant resources (pasture, fertile agricultural land and availability of water) - a situation which triggered competition for resources between the different resource users.

Impacts of land large scale land on herders

The impacts of the large scale land acquisition are usually more visible and widely reported on local farmers than on pastoralists as scientific studies have focused on their impacts on smallholders. Acheampong and Campion's (2014) study of large-scale land acquisition for commercial production of biofuel crops in 11 communities in Ghana including Agogo found that the land acquisitions have led in some cases to violent conflicts between biofuel investors, traditional authorities and the local communities, and loss of livelihoods for local farmers due to expropriation. This has affected households' food production and land tenure insecurity of households. Wisborg's (2012) study of the ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd transnational land deal in Agogo found similar results in which the production shift of biofuel production to large scale mechanized food production triggered community agitation and resistance over loss of farming land and environmental impact. Households for instance depending on charcoal production were affected by the land deal due to the reduction in tree cover cleared for ScanFuel/ScanFarm production thereby losing their income. This study focuses on how Fulani pastoralists are negatively impacted by these land acquisitions.

Land tenure insecurity: Hitherto many large scale land acquisitions, pastoralists grazed and watered their cattle unlimited because of the availability of 'idle' and unused lands. Concessions that they acquired were also closer to these lands where they went to graze freely. According to Fulani, after most of the land deals, areas that they grazed were either turned into farms or plantations making it different to find grazing land⁴. Aside, some of their land concessions were added to the land acquired by the companies. In the particular case of Gariba, a 53 Year Fulani Cattle owner, he lost all his land acquired through leasehold. He was forced to move to Samsu in the Kumawu District of the Ashanti Region after several attacks and conflicts in Agogo over the destruction of farms and plantations. Like farmers, pastoralists with lands in Dukusun, Affrisire and Kwame Addo claimed to have been displaced after ScanFarm Ltd acquisition and had to move to other villages or relocate out of the Agogo area. Also, the loss of farmers' lands intensified agitations primordially against Fulani pastoralists occupying community lands. Farmers openly complained that "we cannot have our own land and strangers will have enough land whilst we do not have land to farm." This was compounded after the court ruling in 2012 that pastoralists move out of all lands. Confiscations of Fulani acquired lands become common place in communities like Nyembekyere where there were organized evictions of Fulani pastoralists from their lands. In comparing the land acquisitions of ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd and the other tree plantation companies, they enjoy tenure security. Since taking their lease, ScanFarm Ltd has enjoyed security of tenure of their land without confiscations as compared to Fulani pastoralists.

Violent conflicts: The confiscations of Fulani acquired lands by farmers have led to resistance from them and their cattle owners due to difficulty in getting grazing land. In Nyamebekyere, pastoralists' resistance to confiscate their land by farmers resulted in violent attacks and the destruction of farmers crops on the disputed land. Farmers claimed that when they took over the land from the herders, the cattle owner came

⁴Officials of ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd, Nicol-Miro Forestry Ltd and Bernard Kojo Offori Teak Plantation Ltd maintained that the lands they acquired were never part of pastoralists lands.

in the company of police officers and armed guards to destroy their crops on the disputed land and took back the land. These conflicts in some instances have resulted in deaths as many of the herders are armed to protect themselves and their lands. Official records show that they have been over 14 deaths in the area between 2006 and 2013 while crop destruction cases reported are over 300. There have also been conflicts particularly in 2013 between the pastoralists and ScanFarm (Gh) Ltd regarding cattle straying into the company's maize fields and destroying lots of them. The Company has resolved to kill such animals and surcharge the animal owners. Similarly, tree plantation companies have had conflicts with Fulani pastoralists over the destruction of tree seedlings. Nicol-Miro Forestry Ltd for instance claimed that between 2009 and 2011, almost all seedlings sown by the company on it acquired land were destroyed by cattle and attempts to drive away the pastoralists from trespassing their plantations were met with violent resistance.

Pastoralists' access to resource: Pastoralists' access to resources (fresh pasture and water) remains the main stay of their livelihood (Adriansen, 2008). In Agogo, pastures around sources of water are also patronised by pastoralists for grazing their cattle. Therefore, pathways to pasture lands and sources of water are spatial movements of herders to graze their cattle. According to pastoralists due to the scramble for land, farmers now extend farming deep into the woodland savannah and around sources of water thereby blocking their access to pasture and water bodies. These blockages to pathways to pastureland and water bodies tend to affect them in getting resources. A group of pastoralists in an FGD at Bebome claimed that not having access to pasture means their cattle cannot get the right nutritional requirements for their cattle which negatively affect cattle production. Pastoralists also complained about their inability to access water for their cattle around ScanFarm Ltd concessions.

Conclusions and Outlook

The study found that large scale land acquisitions have negatively impacted Fulani in relations to access to land and pastoral resources; led to violent confrontations between them and farmers in particular; and resulted in tenure insecurity for them. Agro-investor and tree plantation companies have guaranteed land tenure security than Fulani pastoralists. Also, competitions for land has resulted in violent conflicts with farmers and these conflicts with local farmers have led to them being evicted from lands whilst lands leased to them are also confiscated by various groups and farmers. The overall implication of these is the impact on their livelihoods where many are losing out in getting land to increase their production and other pastoralists are relocating from the area to other areas which according them do not have enough resources needed by their cattle.

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