



Tropentag, September 20-22, 2023, hybrid conference  
“Competing pathways for equitable food systems transformation:  
Trade-offs and synergies”

## Access to agricultural land for Uruguayan youth and the role of the national institute INC

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### Abstract

Globally, the farming sector is facing the problem of overageing. Youth that are interested in the farming sector are often lacking starting capital, which constrains them from earning a livelihood in the sector. This is also the case in Uruguay, where the National Colonisation Institute (INC) helps individuals accessing land, with a special focus on young people. The INC rents out fractions for half the market price, offering an attractive option for youth.

This case study highlights the challenges of youth ( $\leq 35$  years) accessing land in Uruguay and the criteria according to which the INC selects applicants. Furthermore, the work evaluates whether the INC plays a role in countering landgrabbing in Uruguay and whether the INC model could be applied in other countries as well.

Wanting to capture individual experiences and opinions in detail, a qualitative research approach was chosen. Six young people that all had faced difficulties accessing land were visited on their farms in Uruguay and semi-structured interviews were carried out. Semi-structured interviews were also realised with staff of the INC as well as key experts on the topics of landgrabbing, youth, and access to land. The secondary data collection was complemented with a literature study.

Findings suggest that the evaluation criteria of the aspirants must be revised because there are contradictions within the evaluation scheme. On top of that, inconsistencies in the interviews and inappropriate assumptions show that the interviews with the aspirants are not always carried out in a professional manner. Having a mission of providing access to land for smallholder family farmers, the INC is not a suitable tool to fight landgrabbing and on top of that only covers 3% of the country's agricultural surface. However, because all land with a certain quality first must be offered to the INC at market price, it can help with price transparency on Uruguay's land market.

The INC model is certainly interesting to be replicated in other countries. Certain adaptations to the country-specific circumstances will have to be made.

**Keywords:** Access to land, INC, land tenure, smallholder farmers, Uruguay, young farmers