



Large-scale land acquisitions and customary land rights: Post-closure dynamics of biofuel investments in the Western Region of Ghana

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In the early 2000s, significant portions of customary land in Ghana were leased to foreign investors for biofuel feedstock production, reflecting broader market-driven transformations of tropical landscapes. However, rather than becoming a success story, many of these investment projects failed over time, exposing critical gaps in governance and policy frameworks.



Introduction

- Large-scale land acquisitions for biofuel feedstock were promoted as pathways for energy security and rural development.
- Yet numerous projects were short-lived or failed, leaving complex legacies for host communities and customary land governance.

Research Objective

- What are the post-closure impacts of foreign biofuel investments on host communities in the Western Region of Ghana?



Research Design

A single-case study approach.



Methodologies

Data collection

Primary data: semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews.



Data analysis

Thematic analysis with the support of MAXQDA software.

Results

Post-closure impacts include:

Intensified struggles over access, use, and control

- Competing claims among chiefs, landlords, tenants, new investors, and illegal miners.

Emergence of new forms of collective organisation and local autonomy

- Communities mobilised and reorganized to defend interests and influence decisions.

Everyday practices as assertions of land claims

- Intensified cultivation, strategic crop choices, and physical occupation became key practices.

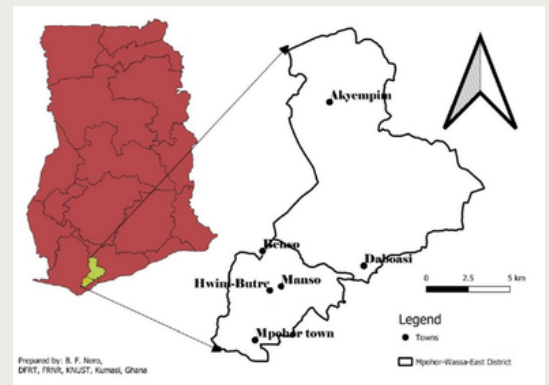
Repositioning within an evolving land governance landscape

- Different actors sought to negotiate, reclaim, or consolidate their positions as formal investors exited.

Conclusion

The closure of large-scale agricultural investments does not mark an endpoint but rather initiates a prolonged and contested post-closure phase.

Map of study site



Mpohor district, Western Region Ghana

Highlights

The post-closure phase is characterised by:

- Increased vulnerability
- Opportunities for institutional innovation
- Strengthened community solidarity

Acknowledgements: This work is funded by the Global Partnership Network (GPN) at the University of Kassel.