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FARMING MATTERS

Small-scale agriculture for a sustainable society

Formerly known as LEISA Magazine

Securing the right to land

▮ Oxfam's "Land and Power" report ▮ Knowledge management within IFAD ▮ "Re-peasantisation" in Brazil

A group of international organizations, businesses and researchers brought together by Wageningen UR are jointly posing the question:

"WHAT WORKS WHEN SCALING INCLUSIVE AGRI-FOOD MARKETS?"

The Seas of Change is a learning and research initiative linked with an international workshop on 11-13 April 2012 that will lead to a follow-up agenda for action. The focus is on how business with the right support from government, donors, NGOs and research can scale up inclusive agri-food market development to ensure food security for 9 billion people and help to tackle poverty.
Inclusive business means creating profitable business models and strategies that help drive economic opportunities for those who would otherwise be left behind – small-scale farmers, local agribusinesses, the rural unemployed.

Scaling up inclusive business requires new models of business, innovative financing mechanisms, effective public private partnerships, supportive policies and mobilisation of peoples' capacities. Creating the enabling conditions calls for effective partnerships between business, producer organisations, policy makers, donors, civil society organisations, knowledge institutions and international agencies. Much remains to be learned about getting these partnerships right and how the different players can most effectively play their role.

THE PURPOSE AND OUTPUTS

We will bring together 100 senior practitioners who are creating and implementing inclusive business models with those who can provide a constructive overview. The outputs will include a pragmatic follow-up agenda to guide new investment in inclusive agri-food markets, a synthesis of recent research and workshop's outcome, and an interactive website that makes key resources and findings easily accessible.

For any additional information on the learning initiative and workshop please check our website http://www.seasofchangeinitiative.net. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation through info@seasofchangeinitiative.net

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Thank you, Grandma Nasah

For the majority of small-scale farmers and sharecroppers in Indonesia, the Green Revolution has caused a lot of suffering since it began in the 1970s. Farmers no longer sow their own seeds; there are no cattle to provide draft power or additional income on the farm; there are very few rice barns left in the villages and many people have had to sell their land. Exposure to harmful pesticides and mountains of debt are now the daily reality for most of Indonesia's family farmers. In addition to all this, traditional agricultural knowledge is being lost. Farming no longer belongs to the farmers, and most of the youth see no future in becoming a farmer. The mothers of the junior high school girls in the picture were the "young generation of the Green Revolution", but many of them now work abroad as maids in Saudi Arabia.

Ibu Nasah has lived a tough and often indebted life, but she still owns a 0.3 hectare paddy field, which she cultivates. After joining a community Farmer Field School in a nearby village she has now become one of the facilitators in the local school. Thanks to people like her, these junior high school students, the next generation on, are reconnecting to agriculture and to the paddy eco-system – no minor achievement when we consider that rice is the most important staple in this country of 240 million people. Thank you indeed, Grandma Nasah!

Text and photo: Tati Krisnawaty / Kaliaget Organic School

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AND MORE

This issue was produced in collaboration with Oxfam Novib

Oxfam Novib

Planet for sale

Two hundred and twenty seven million hectares of land in developing countries – an area the size of Western Europe – has been sold or leased since 2001, mostly to international investors. The bulk of these land acquisitions have taken place over the past two years (see Oxfam Report: Land and Power, p.40). Think about this. If this trend continues, the entire planet would be sold to international (and local) investors within the next two decades. No one can foresee the implications of this, but they will be far reaching.

In Africa, large tracts of agricultural land are being bought or leased by foreign investors for ridiculously low prices. In India, tour operators, movie stars, politicians, resorts, urbanites and land mafia are speculating in ever smaller pieces of land and prices are skyrocketing (see Suprabha Seshan's column on p.45). Whatever the shape of transactions, they all show one major development: land has become currency in the hands of politicians, investors and speculators – just like food and water.

Land is the basis of existence for 400 million small-scale farm families. The Earth is their "mother": she needs to be respected and cared for. These farmers will be the first victims of the present rush for land. The global rush for land is being justified by claiming that small-scale farmers are unproductive and incapable, and that the best option is to ease them out and invest in "rational" agriculture. This misrepresentation of the importance of small-scale farmers, pastoralists and forest dwellers for our planet, and the denial of their productivity and of their rights to land, food, water and other resources, must be challenged head-on.

This issue of Farming Matters has been produced with the valuable support of Oxfam Novib. It builds on a central theme for Oxfam International: the issues of land and power. Monique van Zijl invites readers to be part of a metaphoric bull (see theme overview, p.8) in which disparate alliances work in alliance with each other to create a powerful body of people and institutions that stand up for common sense. Let us join forces and support small-scale farmers in their legimitate quest for land rights.

Edith van Walsum

Edith van Walsum, director ILEIA

Greening the economy

The coming Rio+20 conference of June 2012 will focus on the importance of "greening the economy" (see page 32). According to UNEP, a "green economy" describes an economic system "that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. In its simplest expression, a green economy can be thought of as one which is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive." Are these just pretty words to describe an impossible objective? Many civil society groups are sceptical, warning that unless fundamental changes occur, this will be no more than a type of "greenwashing". Others are more positive, thinking that with courage, will and a clear vision, we can change the economy.

As Rio+20 reflects on the developments of the past 20 years, so do we. What have been the changes since the first Rio conference in 1992? Are we moving in the right direction? Throughout all these years we have been reporting on and sharing many successful cases of sustainable agriculture practices and approaches. How successful have we been in scaling them up and broadening their impact? What have been the *enabling* factors in the larger context?

RIO+20
United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

And what are the *disabling* factors? Share your opinions and ideas about the future (who will be the farmers of the future and how will they contribute to greening the world's economy?), and share your experiences reflecting the role of small-scale farmers, both men and women, today. Family farmers have a lot to show, and a lot to say. How to make their voices heard? What message will we bring to Rio?

Please visit and leave your comments and opinions on our website, and send your articles for the June issue of *Farming Matters* to Jorge Chavez-Tafur, editor, before March 1st, 2011. E-mail: j.chavez-tafur@ileia.org

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Farming Matters welcomes comments, ideas and suggestions from its readers. Please send an e-mail to ileia@ileia.org or write to P.O. Box 90, 6700 AB Wageningen, the Netherlands.

Developing sustainable food systems

It worries me that, at some point when politicians finally "get it", they will try to legislate a sustainable food system into existence. What I really think needs to happen is that ordinary people, for the most part, need to take the lead in (re)developing sustainable food systems. Government needs to stand by and let it happen. It needs to stop supporting industry and a globalised food system led by profit. If profit is the goal, then that becomes the measure of success, and not whether or not people get fed. What farmers need is access to information. My recent experience in Senegal with urban farmers tells me that they are hungry for information. It should be up to them how they use that information to improve their production in ways that are most relevant to their social and economic situations.

Stephanie White, in response to the AgriCultures blog "Wars are fought over food in the future"

Home-grown school feeding

In semi-arid areas, not many crops may do well due to inadequate, erratic and unreliable rainfall. However, crops such as sorghum, millet, cow peas and cassava can do fairly well. Despite this, production of such crops is limited, mainly because of low market demand (many people tend to rely on maize as their staple food). Promotion of home grown school feeding in such regions can trigger increased production of drought-tolerant crops because schools will provide a ready market for them. This would be a win-win situation where both the school community and the surrounding farmers benefit.

Titus Mutinda, on the online debate on Home Grown School Feeding

Regional food systems 1

The latest issue provided me with a wealth of information and inspiration. I work in Scotland as a nutritionist with the NHS and part of our work involves giving small lectures and demonstrations on the importance of healthy eating and diversified diets. The clients I work with suffer from obesity, heart disease, diabetes and various deficiencies caused by poor diet. I used the article about the Let's Go Local campaign to encourage my patients to make changes in their diets. Of course, Pohnpei Island is very far removed from the areas where I work but the health problems caused by a poor diet and relying on processed foods are the same. The shift the campaign has made from imported foods to relying on what is available and produced locally is very positive and is the way forward for the diets of the future.

Anne Morkyte, Glasgow, Scotland

Regional food systems 2

I was really inspired by your article about the Food Acquisition Programme (FAP). But while the authors leave no doubts that it does work, I am generally suspicious about initiatives like this that are centrally steered and enforced in a top-down way. The article did not look at some of what I think are the important issues, leaving some unanswered questions. Is this programme sustainable? Do all target groups benefit equally from governmental support? Do farmers have influence over what they grow and how? I would have liked to see a more critical view on the FAP. I understand that it is promising that national governments recognise the need to support regional food systems. Yet, I believe that it is as important to look at how programmes are implemented as it is to describe their content.

Marta Dabrowska, Wageningen, the Netherlands

Regional food systems 3

Thank you for your informative article on the "Incredible Edible" movement. This community supported agriculture project is inspiring. Reading about the current dysfunctional agriculture system can be quite disheartening, as such massive change is urgently needed. But articles like this one show promise and hope. I work with an organisation called Enfo (an Irish information service on the environment). We work a lot with children and young people, providing information about more sustainable living and informing them about environmental issues. After reading the piece about the Incredible Edible project we are determined to start our own project, perhaps amongst schools. The young people I have spoken to about this are enthusiastic about getting involved. Thanks again.

Martin Hunter, Wicklow, Ireland

Mobilising for change

Discourses and approaches to land rights have a long and complicated history, as do the various social and political contexts in which these discussions take place. There are numerous drivers of the renewed contests for control over land. Recently, the convergence of crises in the supply of food, feed, fibre, and in the financial and energy sectors, have heightened the competition for land resources between groups with very different levels of power and influence. Land contestation is likely to increase exponentially in the coming years and will renew the urgency to both (re)frame questions of land rights and to consider new forms of resistance to land rights violations. This edition explores a range of responses by different people and organisations to ensuring land rights in the face of increased competition for land, which can only exacerbate the unresolved problems of poverty and food insecurity.

Text: Monique van Zijl

The discourses that frame land rights discussions and seek to mobilise a new land tenure paradigm show a clear divergence in tactics. Mainstream academics, international NGOs, (inter)national investors and the governments of developing countries often claim that, with proper regulation, responsible investments in land can have positive developmental outcomes. By contrast, others are looking beyond responses that will either endorse or marginally reform the current model of primitive accumulation. Instead, they seek a fundamental change in the dominant agrarian paradigms and a moratorium on land acquisition.

Mobilising for change need not be paralysed by this conceptual binary. Looking at the cases presented in this edition, it becomes apparent that there is a shared agenda for building broad-based alliances.

Because growing land pressure and competition for land affects marginal groups the most, it is essential to build and work in broad-based alliances. Inequality in power means that local land users who are most vulnerable to losing their land are most often those with the least means (either formal or informal) to (re)claim their land rights. Moreover, the more contested land rights are, the higher the likelihood of (violent) conflict. As demonstrated in the Oxfam report (see p. 40), local elites and large investors often have the power to override the rights of legitimate land users. Local land tenure regimes are complex. There are overlapping international and national investment regulation protocols. Another element is the increasingly transnational nature of capital, coupled with the under-regulated power of the (local) economic elite. Together these factors imply that addressing land rights necessarily involves speaking to power and politics. Tackling such power requires consolidated mobilisation and solidarity in a complex interplay of pragmatic (for example, the immediate formalisation of traditional land rights) and tactical (for example, Via Campesina's location of land rights within a wider narrative of comprehensive agrarian reform) interventions. How might such broad alliances for land rights function in practice?

Giving it horns *Impondo zankhomo* (or "the horns of the bull") is the term for a Zulu battle strategy used during the reign of King Shaka. This analogy can be applied to describe movements for change that

harness radically different approaches and groups. The metaphor of the bull's horns describes the way in which disparate alliances can work in sync with each other and create a consolidated powerful body. The horns are very fast and can cover large (intellectual and ideological) distances. In this way, radicals can encircle and pin down their target. Whilst the horns set the direction, the much larger main body has time to consolidate, align and, ultimately take a strong position, carrying the legitimacy and weight of a broad-based movement. We can see the right horn as representing those who wish to regulate land rights through codes of conduct, global principles, standards and guidelines, and the left horn as representing those wishing for a moratorium on the transfer of land rights or radical land (re)distribution in favour of the disposed and landless rural poor. Both are needed and cannot do without each other.

Manure of the revolution

2011 has been a year of people-driven resistance. The Arab Spring, the "Occupy" movement and the protests against austerity programmes in Europe all signal the ability of different people and their respective struggles to mobilise and unite. These movements are not owned by radicals and progressive thinkers; they are fundamentally owned by ordinary people allied with civic groups, NGOs, (new)media, organised social movements, academia, opposition politicians, and even the military. We see the "right-horn" reformists and the "left-horn" revolutionaries carrying forward a large coalition of ordinary people. What can we learn from this in terms of mobilising for land rights? How can we sensitise, mobilise, and organise people, support small-scale producers and landless peasants and change the policies and the practice of governments, investors and financers in order to ensure more sustainable rural livelihoods and access to natural resources? There is a common thread that links the patriarchal lynchpins of rural families with big (inter)national investors; progressive civil society with large development actors, and formal farmers' unions with peasants' movements. This thread is clearly visible throughout the articles in this edition of *Farming Matters*, which share a common narrative of power and inequality. We are unlikely to see a single global breakthrough in land rights governance or to witness a land rights revolution. But, these cases do demonstrate steady progress towards a shared view on ensuring and assuring land rights. Maille Faughnan (p. 36) demonstrates that we can change how people think about gender equality; events in Araponga (p. 10) demonstrate that considerable change is possible when family farmers mobilise and expand their networks of social relations. The land rights movement in Nepal (p. 28) has been able to mobilise development partners, and Thea Hilhorst (p. 24) describes how land rights can be formalised in ways that do not disrupt social systems or dispossess existing holders of land rights. Reading through these narratives, I feel that Gine Zwart's "smart lane" (p. 42) can be the new fast lane.

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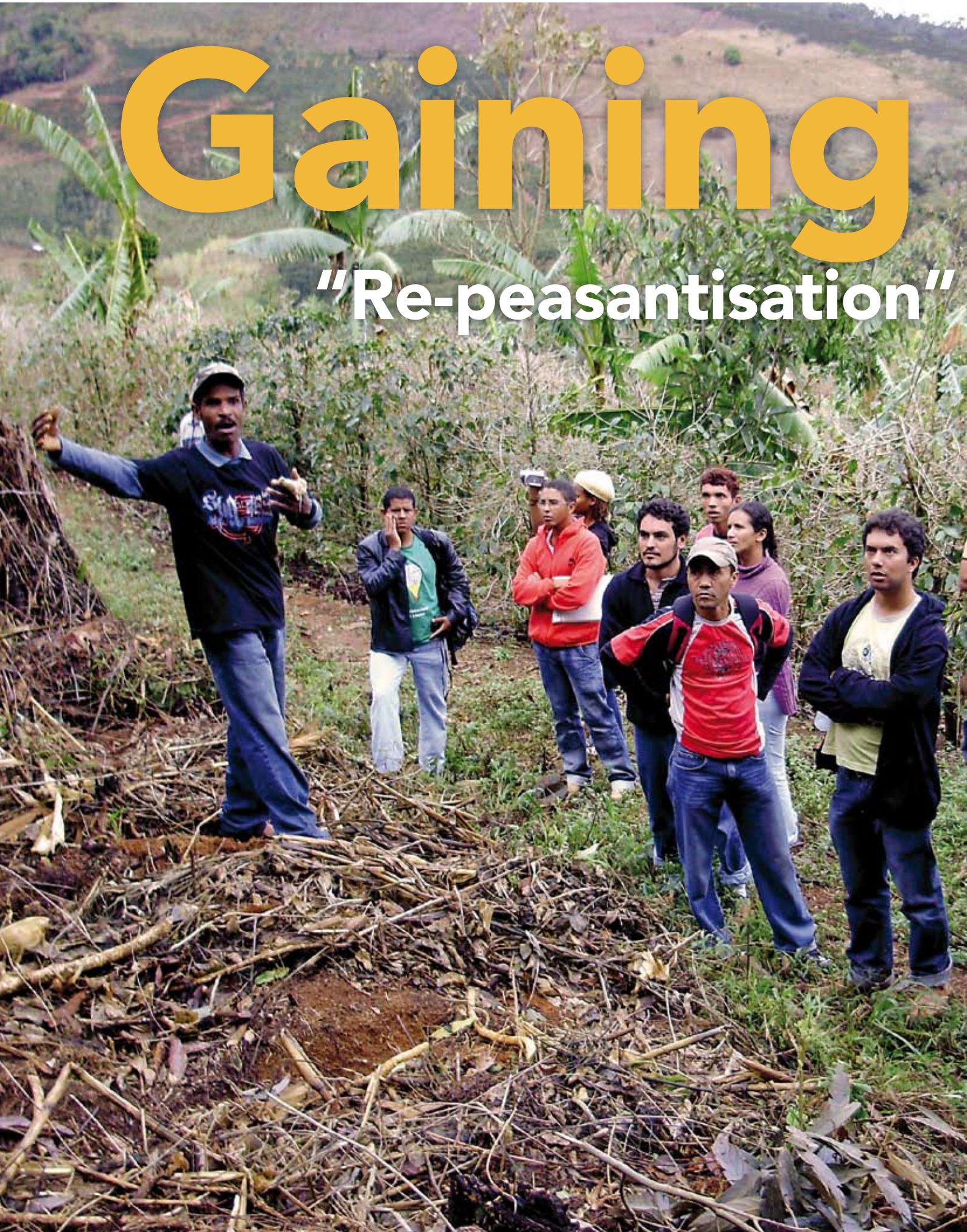
On the one hand, those who wish to regulate land rights through principles, standards and guidelines. On the other, those wishing for a moratorium, or radical land (re)distribution. Both are needed. Photo: Stephen Smith

Gaining

"Re-peasantisation"



control: in Araponga

Innovative policies in Brazil, such as the Zero Hunger Programme, have significantly reduced poverty in the past decade. Yet, land distribution remains a serious challenge: 46% of all land is controlled by 1% of the population. In Araponga, farmers have not only been able to acquire land: they have increased their options in a sustainable manner.

Text: Leonardo van den Berg, Fabio Faria Mendes and Ana Paula Teixeira dos Campos

Landless sharecroppers and rural wage labourers are the poorest layers of the population in the municipality of Araponga. Until recently they dared not even dream of running their own farms. Most of the land belonged to landlords. "Land grabs" have been happening here for decades, largely because many farmers are vulnerable and do not possess legal documents to their land, even if they have lived there for several generations. This changed when a group of landless sharecroppers organised themselves to purchase land and establish a farm. Since 1987, more than 200 landless families have purchased land covering a total area of more than 700 hectares. This has not gone unnoticed and is being replicated in neighbouring municipalities. Thanks to their agency, or their capacity to act, these seemingly powerless peasants are refuting the commonly-held idea of "the disappearing peasantry". They have embarked upon a "quest for space" which, over the course of time, has proved successful.

The "quest for space"

This change grew out of the dissatisfaction of sharecroppers and rural wage labourers in Araponga, a municipality with just over 8000 inhabitants in the Zona da Mata region, in the state of Minas Gerais. Sharecroppers cultivate land owned by a landlord, in exchange for a share of the harvest. The life of a sharecropper involves hard physical labour and long working days with little control over their harvest or income. Many sharecroppers receive less than half of the harvest (in some cases, they only receive one-eighth of the harvest, despite being promised half in agreements), while they do all the work and are not even allowed to choose which crops to plant or how to carry out farming activities. They are often expected to do extra tasks without extra payment. Rural wage labourers often work under even worse conditions. Some have tried to escape the situation by moving to the city, but many find that life there is even harder.

Farmers became increasingly interested in change after the *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base* (CEBs) were established in 1979. A Catholic priest trained interested community members to become lay leaders, and form small groups of 5 to 20 neighbouring families, who'd meet twice a week to pray, sing and discuss their everyday problems. The CEBs were one of the products of Liberation Theology, a doctrine that has been embraced by large segments of the Brazilian Catholic church since the mid-1960s. Its advocates argue that, rather than limiting themselves to prayers on an individual level, people could develop a deeper relationship with God by joining hands and helping

Pooling ideas, commitment and resources. Photos: Leonardo van den Berg

poor communities. The objective of the CEBs was to promote social justice by helping small communities of Christians to become more autonomous. In Araponga, the establishment of the CEBs increased farmers' *agency* in two important ways. First, it led to a social/cultural redefinition of their way of thinking. Whereas sharecroppers had understood their relationships with their landlords as God given, they started to believe that they could (and, in the name of social justice, should) change them. Second, it led to an expansion in networks: whereas sharecroppers had previously only had close contacts with their relatives, they now began to establish relationships of trust with other CEB members, which included both their neighbours and members of other CEB groups in and outside the municipality. These sharecroppers began to imagine that the space they were seeking could perhaps be found by establishing their own farms.

Control over money, land and labour

To establish these farms, sharecroppers and wage labourers first had to obtain financial capital and land. This was not easy, as most of them did not have enough money to purchase land. Several people started saving, but soon realised that, given their low earnings, this would take a very long time. A few began to borrow money from their relatives, friends and CEB colleagues. This strategic use of relationships of trust and reciprocity spread, and soon became common practice. Another problem that they encountered was that most of the land was owned by landlords. While some landlords were selling land, they were only selling the areas degraded by their poor farming practices. These areas of land were very large and too expensive for most people. Moreover, most landlords did not trust the sharecroppers. Three brothers, Alfires, Aibes and Niuton Lopes, successfully purchased land for one of them by putting all their money together. Gradually, this type of purchase, known as the "*conquista de terras em conjunto*", became common. Groups of people, mostly consisting of CEB members who trusted each other, started pooling their finances, purchasing a large piece of land and dividing it amongst themselves. To avoid raising the landlord's suspicion, those who already owned land or a small car posed as the buyer. The third obstacle was labour, which was needed for harvesting coffee. To solve this problem, an old traditional practice called "*troca de dias*" was revived. Through this system, farmers mobilised a group of people to harvest on a particular day in exchange for their providing help on another day. This approach was also later used for other tasks, such as weeding. With all these means of production under control, the farmers further increased their capacity to act.

A favourable environment

Several other organisations emerged from the CEBs and *conquista* efforts. In 1989, the *Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais* (the Arapongan Farmers' Union) was founded. It began by offering legal support to sharecroppers and wage labourers who were involved in a dispute with a landlord. Later, the union also helped farmers to secure their land rights and acquire the necessary legal property documents for their land. Other organisations began to be established. The *Cooperativa de Crédito* started to offer small, interest-free loans to farmers, making it possible for them to borrow money to purchase inputs. The *Associação dos Agricultores Familiares de Araponga* (or the Araponga Farmers' Association) was

established to purchase seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs in bulk, and sell them to farmers. A regional "umbrella" association was also founded together with other farmers' unions in the Zona da Mata region to lobby at higher levels to change policies that worked against peasants. In short, the "quest for space" led to a growing number of organisations, all of which, together, created a more favourable environment for peasants.

Yet despite these developments, the future still looked grim for many farmers. Most were mono-cropping coffee, and relied almost exclusively on commodity markets for their inputs, produce and food. With the prices of fertilizers and purchased food increasing, and the coffee price remaining stable, farmers' incomes were being squeezed. Moreover, their practices were degrading the land. A group of several farmers' unions (including the Araponga Farmers' Union) joined forces with a group of recent graduates from the University of Viçosa and founded an NGO, the *Centro de Tecnologias Alternativas Zona da Mata* (CTA-ZM) in 1987. A formal alliance was formed between CTA-ZM, several university departments and the farmers' union, to analyse the possibilities for promoting farming practices based on agro-ecological principles. As a result, farmers have turned their coffee plantations into agro-forestry systems and now produce for their own consumption. They have also devised several other practices, such as green manuring and multi-storey intercropping – all of which have improved their soil and secured their livelihoods.

Dealing with future threats

When external threats to land arose, farmers in Araponga were well prepared to fight them off. In 2001, the establishment of a nature reserve, the *Parque Estadual Serra do Brigadeiro*, threatened to displace several farmers. The Arapongan Farmer's Union and several other organisations were able to renegotiate the contours of the park with state authorities so that most of the farmers could remain. In 2007, when a large corporation was planning to buy a plot of land in the community, several farmers organised themselves and jointly purchased the land so that the area would remain free of actors that they did not trust.

Farmers in Araponga have shown what a seemingly powerless group of sharecroppers and rural workers can do. Driven by a *quest for space*, their agency has contributed to the establishment of new organisations, social relations and arrangements that give them control over key resources. This helps them to ward off external threats and establish diversified agricultural production, with a long-term perspective and in accordance with their own norms, values and quality standards. Araponga has shown that considerable change is possible when family farmers have a strong drive, are able to mobilise and expand their networks of social relations, create a protective environment to secure their rights and devise innovative practices. NGOs and government organisations can play a key role in facilitating this.

Leonardo van den Berg (leonardo.vandenberg@gmail.com) conducted research for the Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Brazil, and now works as project co-ordinator of the development organisation OtherWise in the Netherlands. Ana Paula Teixeira de Campos is a PhD student at the Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Fábio Faria Mendes works as Associate Professor at the History Department, Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Brazil.

Agency

The idea of (farmers') agency emerged in opposition to the "structuralist" line of thought, which argued that human behaviour is determined by large structural forces – and which predicted that the forces of capitalism would lead to the disappearance of the peasantry. In his "Central problems in social theory" (1979), Anthony Giddens argued that, "within the limits of information, uncertainty and other constraints (e.g. physical, normative or politico-economic), social actors are 'knowledgeable' and 'capable'. They attempt to solve problems, learn how to intervene in the flow of social events around them and monitor continuously their own actions, observing how others react to their behaviour and taking note of the various contingent circumstances." "Agency" refers then to the capacity to act which is embodied in the individual.

In "Development sociology: Actor perspectives" (2001), Norman Long took a different stance by arguing that agency is only manifested, and can only become effective, when individuals interact: "[...] the capacity to act also involves the willingness of others to support, comply with, or at least go along with particular modes of action. Hence […] agency entails a complex set of social relationships […] made up not only of face-to-face participants but also of components acting at a distance that include individuals, organisations, relevant technologies, financial and material resources, and media-generated discourses and symbols. […] How they are cemented together is what counts in the end."

"Communities are smart enough to make the right choices"

Since the mid-1990s, the International Land Coalition (ILC) has been working to promote equitable and secure access to land for poor men and women in order to combat poverty and achieve food security. With more than 120 institutional members, the Coalition is committed to amplifying the voices of civil society organisations so that they can contribute to both the international debate on land and to national land processes. Born in Senegal, Dr Madiodio Niasse has been the Director of ILC since 2005.

Interview: Laura Eggens

Promoting access to land rights has become increasingly important: the growing global demand for land is increasing the risks of dispossession and the further marginalisation of the rural poor. As Madiodio Niasse explained, "the current food crisis is the result of food supplies not matching the demand, but to a large extent, it is also an issue of inequality of access to the available food and, more generally, to the wealth created. Thus, there is a need to create an environment that is conducive to more equity, particularly in terms of access to land." Land issues have gained recognition in the past few years, due to awareness-raising efforts by many organisations such as ILC, but more so because of what is now known as the "global rush for land in the South". According to the ILC Director, "the recent surge of large-scale land acquisitions, or 'land grabbing', has served as an eye-opener to the importance of land governance. The phenomenon of large-scale transnational land acquisitions is in fact not new. However, since 2007, we are seeing it on a scale that was unknown in recent decades."

What exactly is happening?

There are both pull and push factors. We need to look at both to understand the phenomenon we are witnessing today. Let us start with the pull factors. Why are poor countries opening their doors to foreign investors and giving away their land? In many poor regions of the world the agricultural sector is in crisis. In Africa, for example, it has been weakened by market liberalisation and reduced state intervention. Many developing countries also have poor governance. On the push side, there are many dimensions, but I would like to mention just one, which I see as a key driver of the global rush for farmlands. Highly populated countries in Asia face the loss of arable land (increasingly converted to other industrial, transport and commercial uses) and, more importantly, severe water scarcity. These countries are paying the price of a water-intensive Green Revolution, and their food demand is increasing dramatically, pushing them to look for farmlands abroad as an alternative to depending on an increasingly unpredictable international food market. This adds to the increase in food demand by traditional food-importing countries. In addition, the expansion of agro-fuels and the climate crisis are other important drivers of the phenomenon. This is the context of large-scale land acquisitions, in a simplified manner. One notable aspect is that, for the first time, small-scale farmers and herders are directly competing with powerful international investors for their land.

Should governments mediate between small farmers and large investors?

I see different types of governments. Some genuinely want to develop the agricultural sector of their country, and believe that the scale of investment they need cannot be found at the national level. They are aware of the levels of poverty and unemployment they have to address, and the riots and instability triggered by food price hikes have made this an urgent issue. I think that where governments genuinely want to develop their own agricultural sector, they need to be supported and advised. They need to be provided with adequate information about the various options for developing their agriculture sector, including (but not limited to) attracting foreign investments. They need to understand that there are alternative investment models that do not necessarily involve them giving away their land. It is essential that governments develop their own rural development strategies to serve their national priorities and the interests of their people. The role of foreign investment should be defined within the framework of such national strategies, which should firmly specify the conditions under which it will be acceptable.

And what to do in the case of weaker governments?

In these cases you need investor responsibility. Sometimes investors care about their reputation, and have good intentions, aiming to comply with high standards in their business practices and their engagement in developed countries. But these companies are exceptions; for the most investors the opposite is true. Civil society organisations and governments have a role to play to ensure that private companies from their countries behave responsibly abroad.

If civil society mobilises, what should they focus on?

One of the biggest problems in these large-scale land acquisitions is the lack of transparency. Many deals take place behind closed doors. For an investment transaction to

Farmers and their organisations need to be informed and included. Photo: ILC

be responsive to the needs of a country, it is at least essential that the terms under which it is being decided are known; that relevant parties are involved; and that relevant state organs and agencies play their roles openly. The second element is information sharing and evidence gathering. Information generation and sharing is crucial for an informed debate. Frequently, many of the heated debates about land grabbing are based on misunderstandings instead of a radical opposition on the substance of the problem. Often, protagonists simply do not speak the same language, or refer to the same evidence. In the search for appropriate responses, it is crucial to clarify the issues and to generate and share credible information. It is also important that civil society works directly with farmers, herders, and the owners and users of the land. It is very important to work towards securing land rights for the poor, especially for small farmers. This entails securing the commons; protecting the land that is used by pastoralists and indigenous people; ensuring that small farmers have enough land with secure tenure rights, and preventing governments from allocating their land for foreign investment. These are all important areas which civil society and farmers' organisations should focus on in the future.

The Land Matrix

Since 2009, the different organisations behind the Land Matrix have been systematically collating information on large-scale land acquisitions worldwide. The dataset covers transactions that entail a transfer of rights to use, control or own land through concession, lease or sale, which generally imply a conversion from land used by smallholders or for ecosystem services to large-scale commercial use. It aims to shed light on the six drivers that are contributing to a global rush for land: demand for food, fuel, timber, carbon sequestration, tourism and mineral exploitation. It now includes just over 2,000 deals from 2000-2010. These are cross-checked with data derived from systematic national inventories of land deals based on in-country research carried out by different institutions, alongside the increasing number of postgraduate and commissioned field-based research projects. According to Mr Niasse, "The diversity of our membership means we can show credible data, and this can be used to inform the debates and policy processes at global, regional and national levels."

What is the International Land Coalition doing? Since its establishment 15 years ago, ILC has been focusing on raising awareness on the need for land reform and securing tenure rights, as well as supporting the advocacy efforts of our civil society members. A number of countries and regions have engaged in reform processes – formulation of land frameworks and laws – and ILC members, supported by the Secretariat, have often played an active role in this. We have supported multi-stakeholder consultations, or the formulation and implementation of laws and regulations in a number of countries. We will do this more systematically in the future.

We also invest a great deal in sharing information. Together with a number of partner organisations we are building a Land Portal, which we hope will become the leading source of information on land issues on the Internet over the next few years. Regarding large-scale land acquisitions, we are working on three levels. Firstly, we have helped a number of our members and partners to contribute information on what is happening, adding to the studies done elsewhere. The second area of work is the Land Matrix: we have recorded all the land deals reported in the press, and now have a database of more than 2,000 land deals (see box). Thirdly, we are supporting an open dialogue. This is because civil society, grassroots organisations, and in particular, farmers' organisations, and the owners and the users of the land, are not meaningfully involved in the current discussions, debates and policy processes related to the phenomenon of large-scale land acquisitions and their alternatives. We have started a series of civil society-centred dialogues, working with farmers' organisations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America with the aim of improving their understanding of what is happening. We hope that these dialogues will help them be better prepared to engage in the global debates that are currently taking place.

Is there anything that farmers can do themselves? Yes, they can do many things. The reason why governments and others are looking for investments elsewhere is because they believe the level of investment in the agriculture sector is not enough. Governments, like many of us, often forget that the main investors should be the farmers themselves. The obstacles preventing farmers from investing in their land need to be better understood and then removed. Insecure land tenure is one of these constraints. Climate change and the uncertainty and vulnerability it entails is another. Governments could provide water control infrastructure to help minimise climate risks. If the appropriate conditions are created, farmers are more likely to invest in their land.

Working directly with farmers in an ILC joint research project in Fandriana, Madagascar, and in Mozambique (below). Photos: ILC

What do you think the future holds?

I think we are living in a very challenging period and that competition for land can be expected to intensify. China is no longer food self-sufficient and there are clear indications that it will increasingly rely on imports to fill its expanding food deficits. I think that in the coming years India is likely to lose its self-sufficiency and also resort to food imports. Because of the persistent energy crisis more and more land will be used to produce biofuels. Attempts to mitigate the climate crisis will continue to involve more investments in forests for carbon sequestration, sometimes at the expense of farmlands. While the global food demand will continue to grow dramatically, the amount of arable land will be shrinking. It will become more valuable and attract financial investors. In this context of intensified competition, poor countries will be under tremendous pressure to feed themselves, while their land will be targeted by domestic and foreign investors. Small-scale farmers will be at greater risk.

You worked before on water governance issues. What brought you to work for the International Land Coalition?

Although I moved from water to land (and previously from land to water), I remain in the area of natural resource governance. What I think I have learned from many years of engagement in water issues is that what really matters in the end is to ensure that society, when confronted with difficult choices, engages in an open, inclusive and informed deliberation on the available options before making a choice. My conviction is that any choice made on the basis of a transparent and democratic societal deliberation is legitimate and should be respected, whether it is for or against large or small dams, for foreign or domestic investment, for small or large-scale farms. We should recognise that societies are sometimes confronted with difficult decisions. Take a recent case, which is grabbing the media headlines in my own country, Senegal. A company received 20,000 hectares in a region struggling with poverty, drought and a high level of outmigration. The deal had to be validated by the elected local rural council, which was split into two camps: a camp supporting the venture and another one rejecting it. The dispute turned into violent confrontation within the council, with many casualties. When the government decided to suspend the project, the opponents of the project rejoiced and the supporters of the investment (including hundreds of newly hired workers and their families) threatened to organise public demonstrations. The case is still pending as we talk. This example shows how complex and sensitive the situation can be. Decisions should not be taken lightly by any party. The complexity of the problem and the difficult decisions we face in responding to the challenges we are facing makes me modest. I think it is too simplistic to just say, "stop, ban the investment offers", or "accept them all". Each case is unique, and calls for unique responses that need to be made by societies through open, inclusive, informed and concerted processes. Communities are often smart enough to make the right choices. Our job is to promote information disclosure and more transparency in land transactions, generate and share evidence, amplify the voices of civil society and farmers' organisations and support them in playing an active role in local and national land policy processes.

Land rights in Mongolia: more or fe regulations?

What is the definition of a herder? Are you still a pastoralist if you move your *ger* (the herders' tent) only twice a year? And what if you start growing crops? With an increasing number of competing land claims, Mongolian herders are changing their lifestyles, and this is leading to their position in society being reconsidered. If existing regulations do not support them, should new ones be put in place?

Text: Dorieke Goodijk and Budsuren Tumendemberel

Mongolian tax law defines a herder family as "one or more persons acquiring most or all of their income from animals and following their animals around for most of the year". All herder families are registered in one of the country's *soums* (or villages), and they only pay taxes if they have permanent winter and spring shelters. If they leave their *soum*, they have to pay a tax (per animal per day) to the governor of the other *soum*. But these regulations do not apply during the *dzud*, the common periods of harsh weather, when this tax is not valid, and herders are free to move to other *soums* in order to survive the winter with their animals. Although families try to stay in one place during the winter and move to the next place in spring, in reality herder families often travel long distances throughout the country.

Land in Mongolia

The Mongolian Government owns all the land, but access to it and its use is changing drastically. Mining companies are increasingly exerting pressure on the government to allocate land for mining. Up until now, the government has made official agreements with these companies for one year, with the option of extending them on an annual basis. Other land claims come from Mongolian agricultural companies and private investors interested in growing grains. Many have obtained a 40-year agreement with the government to use a certain area of land, and many more have requested permits. Lastly, all Mongolian citizens can claim 0.07 hectares for their own house in and around Ulaanbaatar (or up to one hectare in other urban areas). Access to land seems to be clearly defined. But do herders also have the right to own land?

Herders have different animals in their flock. In the mountainous areas they herd goats, sheep, cows, yaks and horses, while in the Gobi desert most families also own camels. Cashmere, the fine wool of the goats, is one of the main sources of income; goats can survive well in Mongolian conditions and their meat is not highly prized, so the size of flocks is continually increasing. The goats graze the pastures intensively, even removing the roots of plants. This inhibits plant re-growth and creates completely barren spaces. As a result, the quantity and quality of the pastures are decreasing while the total number of animals increases. This is particularly the case in the vulnerable areas in the Gobi, where herders have to move many times a year to ensure sufficient feed for their herds.

wer

Government officials explain that there is no law related to herders using pastures. Herders can own the place where they build a winter or spring shelter for their animals, with an undefined surface area, if they register this with the local government. All pastures can be freely used by all those who need them, which has led to severe degradation in large parts of the country. New attempts to prevent degradation and improve pasture yields are currently being tried by the central government, and these will directly influence the herders' relationship with the land.

A changing context Since 2008, the Mongolian government has been running specific projects to stop the degradation of pastures and improve their use. These are being tried in most *aimags* (provinces) and involve different organisations. One initiative, supported by the Asian Development Bank and the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (ADB/JFPR), is the "Water point and extension offices for poor herding families" project. This helps herders to form an organisation, receive a water access point (for which they must meet 10% of the costs themselves), make pasture-use plans and follow specific business-related courses. In short, herders

- form their own group with families that want to work together;
- choose a group leader, a water point representative and a pasture expert from among the group members;
- jointly make a business plan, start up new businesses with funds from the project and work together (in selling their produce);
- work together to improve their pastures, signing an agreement with the government to secure exclusive land use rights and access to those pastures.

Extension offices are being established in every *soum* to support this programme.

The first results of the project show that this multi-dimension approach is working well. Since 2008, 75 herder groups have been established (each of about 8 to 12 families). All of them have received funds from the project to develop alternative sources of income, become legal entities (such as NGOs and co-operatives), and opened bank accounts. Sixty-eight business plans have been approved and, with the implementation of these plans, 700 herder fami-

All groups have developed land use plans, and recognise the benefits of implementing them. Photos: Dorieke Goodijk

lies are earning an income from other sources. Some of these newly established businesses – such as growing potatoes, establishing a greenhouse or breeding livestock – are related to agriculture. Others – such as sewing dresses, making felt products and starting a bakery – are non-agricultural. In some cases, these businesses have resulted in a job for those who lost most or even all of their animals during a harsh winter; in others they are helping families to improve their diets by providing fresh vegetables, or increasing the income the family can spend on buying food.

All the groups have developed land use plans for the sustainable use of their pastures. The project also distributed fences to all groups, enabling them to set aside certain areas from which to cut hay for the winter. With this hay, more animals are able to survive the harsh winter. Most importantly, this decreases pressure on the surrounding pastures, leading to better grass growth during the summer and autumn. The tripartite agreement signed with the local government and the project secures the groups' land rights for several years, guaranteeing that they will be able to pasture their animals the following year, and that other herders will not be able to use that area for grazing their animals.

Laws and regulations can help farmers and herders. But should they be encouraged to settle? Photo: Dorieke Goodijk

Is this all for the better?

Herder groups are reacting in a positive way to the changes that the project is bringing: "Before this project started, I lived with my family in my *ger* and the other people lived far away from us. We hardly saw them and were very isolated." A female group leader explains how "now that we have regular meetings, we try to live near each other, and work together on many activities, such as making shelters and selling products." Another 50-year old group leader sighs: "I wish I was 20 years younger so I could use all the possibilities I have now with much more physical energy and strength...".

They all recognise the benefits of their new economic activities, and also see that they can limit the number of livestock they keep and therefore the pressure on the pastures. But this also means making a change in their livelihoods.

As part of the project, herders have learnt about land rights and now know how to use their lands in a more intensive way. They will not enter the pastures of others, as they know how much effort it takes to grow crops or grasses themselves. They now stay in their own area throughout the year, as they have more options for making a living besides herding. But herders in other parts of the country, who are not involved in the project, are still moving around, leading to frictions and degraded pastures, especially in the provinces where pastures are (still) better. Project participants think that there should be more regulations related to the sustainable use of pastures. This would help them to know what to expect in the future and to make investments to improve their area. However, this would mean that the local agreements created by the project would need to be supported by wider laws and regulations, applicable to the whole country.

Laws and regulations can help farmers and herders to use their lands in a more sustainable and productive way. They can also "protect" them against the interests of mining companies and large-scale agricultural producers. But does this mean that Mongolia needs more laws encouraging herders to settle?

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The cavalry is coming

Robin Palmer has written on land rights and the politics of land, initially as an academic in southern Africa, then as a development worker with Oxfam GB, finally as a consultant with Mokoro. He has published extensively on land and agrarian issues.

At the start of this year there was a dangerous conspiracy of silence on the subject of land grabbing. Not anymore. A breakthrough was the hugely energising 3-day global conference at IDS Sussex in May. Amazingly, over 400 people wanted to write papers. Ben White concluded that, having carefully studied the 400 papers, he could not find a single case of any large-scale corporate land acquisition which had fulfilled its claimed developmental role of increasing food security, or providing jobs or other benefits for rural people. So the burden of proof was surely now on those who favour corporate land acquisition and industrial farming over small-scale agriculture.

Since then coverage has grown apace. The Oakland Institute is emerging as a key player, undertaking serious research and finding imaginative ways of publicising issues such as American universities investing their pension funds in ways that contribute to land grabbing. It halted a land deal in South Sudan through use of radio. It has published country reports on Ethiopia, Mali and Sierra Leone and two powerful critiques of the dominant consensus, "*Mis/Investment in agriculture*" and "*The great land grab*". On December 6 it published its reports on Mozambique, Zambia, Sudan and Tanzania plus several briefs.

The International Land Coalition has also produced excellent country research reports on Ethiopia, Zambia, Rwanda, Kenya and Madagascar plus policy briefs. In May it publicly denounced "all forms of land grabbing, whether international or national", and on December 14 it launched its global synthesis report, "*Land rights and the rush for land*". In September, Oxfam published two reports, "*Land and power*", which stated that an area the size of Western Europe has been sold or leased since 2001, mostly to international investors, and "*The New Forests Company and its Ugandan plantations*", plus a video, "*Oxfam sounds Uganda land-grab warning*".

In October, ActionAid produced a powerful video, "*How a biofuels landgrab has destroyed the life of an African village*" (in Tanzania) and is currently running a petition, ("*Stop the biofuel land grab in poor countries*"), aimed at the targets and subsidies that are driving the biofuel boom. The small pressure group GRAIN wrote the hugely influential briefing "*Seized! The 2008 land grab for food and financial security*" in October 2008. Its daily updated site (http://farmlandgrab.org) is absolutely essential reading and quite incomparable.

So, and not a moment too soon, the cavalry is coming.

This is what makes us special

Over the past year ILEIA has contributed to the knowledge management activities of IFAD's East and Southern Africa Division by facilitating a documentation process in Uganda. This involved representatives of four different projects, all of them interested in drawing out specific lessons from their work. In the words of Carole Idriss-Kanago, the Associate Country Programme Manager, this process has helped participants to *"identify those points which make us special and value the importance of sharing them with others"*.

Text: Anne Turinayo and Jorge Chavez-Tafur

We started with a four-day workshop that took place in Kampala in January, where we first went through the basic concepts, principles and conditions needed for a successful documentation process. We stressed the difference between a documentation process and a description, the need to include different opinions and, most importantly, the role of documentation in "generating knowledge". After a short presentation of the methodology, we immediately started the documentation process with the aim of "learning by doing". This meant selecting the part of the project that participants wanted to document and share, describing the main activities and results, and analysing them all in detail, selecting indicators for the results and impact of the project and identifying the reasons (or causes) behind each one.

The four different teams then continued with the description and analysis of their work at their own project bases, identifying the main issues that confronted them while going through the process: the importance of "narrowing" or further defining the case to be documented; the analysis, considering the identification and use of criteria and indicators; the need to capture additional information; and the general presentation of the results. Meetings were then held separately with each team.

Learning by doing

After going through the complete process, participants realised that, in contrast to what they had thought at the beginning, documenting one's own experience is not necessarily difficult, or something that has to be done by external consultants. Participants found that the process "*helped us find a way to tell the untold story*". They also identified some key issues that need special attention.

- Documentation as a participatory process. A documentation process cannot be done in a short time period, or without the involvement of many different people. The exercise showed the importance of getting data and opinions from all those who are or have been involved in a project, and of distributing roles and responsibilities within a team. This led to discussions about the importance of assigning sufficient time and resources.
- Participants in the workshops and process. Considering that documentation is a participatory process, it is essential to carefully consider who should be invited to attend the workshops and meetings. We discussed the pros and cons of inviting too many people and also of inviting farmers. Another important question to consider is the participation

of all team members. Not all team members were able to be present throughout the whole process, affecting their overall participation and the results of the whole process. This gave rise to discussions about how to ensure that all team members can be fully involved.

- The selection of what to write about. The teams discovered that their projects have a broad scope and that there are many things they can write about. This makes it difficult to select just one topic to focus on, and led participants to talk about their "unique selling points", the things that make their projects particularly interesting to others. "*Becoming aware of the points that make us special was perhaps the most important result of the process*".
- Gathering more information. It is not possible for the teams to come up with all the details of a project during one workshop, so access to old reports and other sources of information is vital. It is even more important to go into the field and interview stakeholders. Team members recognised that "*it does not come naturally to deliberately capture information*", and also reflected on the advantages of having colleagues in the field who can be very helpful sources of information and contacts. We looked at the many advantages of using simple technologies such as low-cost video cameras, which can help to record opinions that can be used later.
- The importance of analysis. Apart from describing the project, it is vital to provide an analysis, giving an opinion and saying why were things the way they were. This is not always easy: on the one hand, "*we are not used to expressing negative things…*". On the other, participants had difficulties in coming up with criteria and indicators. This problem was addressed by referring back to the most commonly discussed aspects of the projects (e.g. their overall performance, the environmental impact, the potential sustainability of their project).
- Presenting the results. Presenting the information and opinions gathered is an essential part of the process. A key issue here is to select a specific format (e.g. an article, book or poster). We discussed the importance of considering that (i) the selected format will largely depend on the target audience, (ii) every type of format can be "filled" with the information collected, and that (iii) whatever the format, it has to contain an analysis.

Although none of the teams have yet been able to complete the exercise that they started in January, this process has been referred to as an "effective catalyst". One of them made a brochure, another one a video, a third one made a PowerPoint presentation shared with a large group in Congress, and someone else wrote an article for the IFAD Newsletter. The teams are now busy with "customisation": adapting the information and opinions gathered to different audiences.

Discussing the results of the project in the field, and presenting the results of the process. Photos: Jorge Chavez-Tafur

Taking it further

One of the main issues discussed was how to maintain the momentum of the whole process, and the steps needed to ensure that these efforts continue. Participants discussed budgets, time, support, and the challenge of "*making this part of our daily activities*". They also considered how to improve any future training in documentation processes. It was felt that the facilitators should have more information about the projects and participants before starting the process. It would also be useful to begin to identify what is to be documented before the actual training workshops begin. A documentation process does not need to start from scratch: there is always something already written down. The process might well have been more effective if it had built upon documents that the teams had already produced. Future trainings should also assign enough time for a field visit. The final recommendation was that future workshops should include a session dedicated to briefing project directors and other key IFAD staff in order to ensure and strengthen their support for this work.

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The contribution of local governments

Land governance is the process by which decisions are made regarding access to and use of land and natural resources, the manner in which those decisions are implemented, and the way that conflicting interests are reconciled. In rural areas, informal processes managed by families or communities are often more important for accessing land than statutory law and processes; hence the need for supporting these existing systems. The growing demand for land also means an increasing role for local governments.

Text and photos: Thea Hilhorst

There is a growing interest in land. This is increasing the pressure on rural systems that already have to cope with more demand due to population growth. Consequently, competition over land and natural resources is growing: between men and women; between young people and older generations; within households and families; within user groups and between the urban-based elites and the rural populations. All this is being intensified further by the arrival of new investors from outside the community. The prospect of (or rumours about) land acquisitions by investors or government erodes perceptions of tenure security. Following different approaches, local governments such as municipalities, can play an increasingly important role in these increasingly complex scenarios.

Local and informal responses to competition

One approach is the wider and more precise marking of boundaries, and better recordation of rights and transactions. This requires more use of paper, witnesses, and more markers on the ground (like stones or plants), and can be started by any of the parties in a transaction: land-holding families and customary leaders, NGOs or farmers' organisations. An interesting example is the "*petits papiers*" seen in countries as far apart as Madagascar and Mali. These are contracts between farmers that are put on paper and prepared in the presence of witnesses to record sales and leases. Local governments in, for example Benin, are starting to play a role in improving the quality of the "*petits papiers*" by making standard forms available.

Another approach that is spreading is to engage local government officials as witnesses, and ask municipalities to keep a copy. In Burundi, local governments promote the taking of measures to prevent land-related conflict by encouraging the demarcation of fields using locally available materials, and promoting the registration of polygamous marriages. Without registration, women and children cannot inherit.

Yet another response is to develop local conventions that regulate access to collectively used resources, such as grazing areas and forests. Following negotiation, the agreements are written up and involve the engagement of local authorities. This approach has been spreading since the early 1990s, and is now also being supported and promoted by local governments. In other cases, local governments have prepared by-laws on land use and common pool resources (e.g. Niger, Ethiopia). In Mali, local governments are also involved in protecting livestock corridors, forests and fisheries.

Formally securing rights Any increase in competition for land and natural resources, or rising fear of expropriation by the government, is accompanied by a growing demand for securing rights formally through land registration offices or local governments. The urgency of registering local rights to land and natural resources becomes even more important when investors are moving into the area, or when claims are being made by actors who do not adhere to the local ways. This is particularly needed in places where the local institutions in charge of managing resource tenure are breaking down and where conflict is becoming more entrenched and vicious.

The services to secure rights to land are not always found in rural areas, or are not appropriate or accessible (where appropriateness refers to services that are responsive to local requirements and circumstances, and accessibility concerns issues such as proximity, language and costs). Formal titling systems were set up in colonial times and after independence, but the percentages of titled land are low, and mostly in urban areas. Titling services are often expensive, poorly accessible and time-consuming. In addition, when titling systems were rolled out in rural areas, inequity often increased as many – in particular, women, herders or indigenous communities – lost user rights giving access to land, trees or pastures. Titling has also accelerated the individualisation of rights, and the concentration of land. The individualisation and privatisation of grazing land that used to be managed by the community or clan can strengthen the position of women and younger people in the short run – at least in those cases where they receive their share. But in the longer run, they may lose these assets when tempted to mortgage and sell to outsiders. Moreover, it undermines the wider pastoral production system because there is less land and fodder tree areas available.

New opportunities Since the 1990s, a number of countries have reviewed their land policies and legislation, and have introduced new land administration approaches. These new policies are not just about protecting local rights in a better way: they also seek to promote investments and attract investors, something that is being increasingly attempted by governments and international institutions. They also provide openings for the decentralised administration of land and natural resources.

These policies seek to develop low cost and accessible

An approach that works: engaging local officials as witnesses.

Much can be done to prevent conflicts; even more is possible with the support of the local authorities.

forms of land administration, with approaches that combine pragmatism and flexibility. They take into account lessons learned from titling programmes and reflect a greater understanding and appreciation of customary systems of tenure, while acknowledging their bias against, for example, women or migrants. Among the common aspects we can see public inventories of (all) rights, boundary recognition, and also the demarcation and issuing of certificates. A shift towards some form of legal recognition of customary rights over land and natural resources is another general feature.

Inventories may cover all rural lands or only the farmed plots. Registration of customary rights may be done at the request of individuals, as seen in Burundi, Madagascar or Niger. Other countries pursue the nationwide systematic registration of user rights (e.g. Ethiopia, Rwanda). In Tanzania, villages have received a collective title, which is followed by the systematic registration of customary land undertaken and managed by the village. Certificates may be kept at the village level (e.g. Tanzania, Malawi), at the local government level (e.g. Burkina Faso, Ethiopia) or as part of a national database (e.g. Madagascar, Rwanda). Experiences in Ethiopia and Burundi suggest that when the priority is to reduce community level conflicts and improve land justice, public recognition of boundaries and rights at the community level is the most important step.

Common lands are part of the registration process in Burkina Faso and Niger, but are not addressed in Burundi and Madagascar. Experience in Ethiopia shows that if the registration process does not include measures to protect rights to forested land and grazing lands, privatisation and degradation may accelerate. In southern Ethiopia, for example, farmers converted forested lands into fields to secure their claims.

New roles

Improving local tenure security on a massive scale, and not just for a few, requires the engagement of local institutional actors. But building sustainable institutions and mechanisms takes time, so the best option is to work through existing organisations, such as the local governments. It is therefore positive to see that, since the 1990s, there has been a (new) wave of institutional reform towards devolution in many African countries. This has led to the establishment of thousands of new local governments and to increasing responsibilities: in fact, in places where local governments were already in existence when new land policies were drafted, they became part of the implementation structure. Local governments may be in charge of land registration (with specialised units or staff, as in Benin, Burundi, Madagascar and Rwanda) or be expected to provide support to deconcentrated land administration services (e.g. Ethiopia).

New land policies often also propose the creation of committees at the community or local government level, assisting with the inventory of rights and registration, recording transactions and even promoting reconciliation: their work will make it possible to achieve scale at low cost. Committee members may be elected, proposed by the community, or appointed. In most countries, customary authorities are encouraged to become members or to collaborate with these committees. Examples of such committees are the Land Administration Committee in Ethiopia, the *commissions foncières* in Niger, the *commission de reconnaissance locale* in Madagascar and Burundi, and the land adjudication committees in Rwanda. Making sure that women are part of these committees has proven to be a very important step towards equity in Ethiopia.

By way of conclusion

Land is a finite resource, and investors seem more aware of the growing scarcity than local communities. The traditional custodians of the land, the local community or farmer organisations, as well as the local users themselves, share the challenge of managing the growing conflicts over land and regulating land acquisitions by investors. There is much that they can do themselves to prevent conflict, such as promoting boundary demarcation, conducting mediation around inheritance and securing rights in general. But they can do much more with the support of the local authorities. This support is increasingly present.

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Agriculture is grounded on women's land rights

For more than forty years, Landesa has been striving to secure land rights for the world's poorest families. With headquarters in Seattle, Washington, its work is based on the firm belief that having legal rights to land is the first condition for prosperity. "We've learned", explained Landesa's CEO, Tim Hanstad, "that when a family has land of their own, they have the opportunity and the means to improve nutrition, income and shelter. We've seen that when land rights are secure, the cycle of poverty can be broken - for an individual, a family, a village, a community and entire countries."

Text: Nicola Piras Illustration: Fred Geven

According to research conducted by several experts, one billion of the world's poor share two common traits. Firstly, their subsistence is based on agriculture; secondly, they quite often lack secure rights to the land they cultivate. As Mr Hanstad points out, "we can consider landlessness as one of the best predictors of extreme poverty around the world". But there is another important aspect that emerges from analyses of the world's poor: although women produce more than half of the food consumed in most developing countries, they rarely have any legal claim to the land they till.

Ensuring women's land rights is a core focus for Landesa. In 2009 it opened the Center for Women's Land Rights, aiming specifically at "putting the most powerful development tool – land – into the hands of the most promising users – women". When women have legal control over their land, Mr Hanstad told us, they can invest in their family's future and can ensure that their children's needs are met. "Of course," he continued, "women's land rights are a matter of social justice; but they are also critical from an economic perspective". Conscious of the importance of adopting approaches that are sensitive to specific local realities, political institutions, history and culture, the centre works together with governmental institutions to develop tailor-made solutions. Because land rights and customary rights are different in each country Landesa's programmes are different in each country.

Landesa devotes much of its efforts to educating and informing policymakers, researchers, and practitioners around the world, with a special view to promoting changes in laws and policies that will protect and strengthen women's land rights. To this end it has launched the Women's Land Rights Fellowship Programme, to train and mentor legal professionals. Next year it will launch the Women's Land Rights Visiting Professionals Programme, which will bring professionals from the developing world to Seattle to improve their ability to work on women's land rights issues. Both programmes are run from the organisation's Seattle office. And both programmes aim to create a network of professionals that work at both national and international levels. The organisation is also building an E-Library on Women's Property Rights, aiming to create a worldwide database to support practitioners and advocates in finding the most effective solutions to ensure women's legal ownership of land.

Founded in 1967, Landesa was formerly called the Rural Development Institute. It currently leads projects in China, India, Liberia, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and has ongoing research activities in a number of other countries. To find out more about Landesa and its Center for Women's Land Rights please visit http://www.landesa.org/women-and-land/ or contact Ms Rena Singer, Landesa's Senior Communications Manager, at renas@landesa.org.

Our 2P approach

Land is more than a production resource. In the rural areas of countries like Nepal it determines an individual's socio-economic status, and is therefore strongly related to power issues. Landlessness and insecure land ownership are the major causes of poverty, social injustice and food insecurity. Tackling these issues therefore means influencing policies in favour of more land rights.

Text and photos: Jagat Deuja and Bed Prasad Khatiwada

Agriculture is the main occupation of two-thirds of the population of Nepal (and 90% of the country's poor). Yet, according to the census of 2001, at least 25 percent of the 4.2 million households do not own land – not even a place to install a hut. Historically, land in Nepal belonged to the state and its rulers, who granted it to supporters, servants or those who pleased and prayed to them. These lands, however, were not empty: there were farmers and tillers living and working there. The new landlords would then give farmers the right to farm, in exchange for the "koot" or rent paid in cash or kind. In many cases, farmers ended as bonded labourers (such as the "haliya" or the "kamaiya" in western Nepal), while in others they became sharecroppers, sharing at least half of their yields with those who officially owned the land.

Rooted at the community

This overall picture continued, and although a Land Reform Act was passed in 1964, it was not until the 1990s that land became an "issue" in the country's political discussions and that various efforts were initiated. In 1995, the Community Self Reliance Centre (or CSRC) started an awareness programme in the district of Sindhupalchowk, working with landless tillers or farmers. Since 2003 the programme has expanded significantly with the support of ActionAid and other organisations, and now reaches 50 out of the country's 75 districts. Focusing on the strong link between access to land and the universally-accepted right to food, CSRC sees the right to land as the starting point for all its efforts. By empowering land-poor men and women, CSRC helps them to claim and exercise these basic rights. CSRC's programmes have included capacity building of rights holders (poor women and men); changing and/or enacting polices in favour of the land-poor; developing new and alternative models of land reform; and creating and mobilising agents of change at the community level. Most of these activities are now co-ordinated by community members in the National Land Rights Forum. This is an organisation run by the farmers themselves, with democratically-elected committees established throughout the country. With committees in 42 districts and in more than 2,000 villages, the forum had almost 100,000 members at the end of 2010. The National Land Rights Forum sees itself as the national organisation for all those working on the land, including the landless, squatters, tenants, farmers, bonded labourers, and all those deprived of land rights. They are the ones who are leading the land rights movement in Nepal.

Pressure and partnerships

CSRC's support is based on a so-called "2P approach": helping those in the field exert *pressure* and demand their rights,

"They are the ones leading the land rights movement in Nepal".

and at the same time working in *partnership* with different organisations and the national government (participating, for example, in the government-formed High Level Commission for Land Reform). CSRC supports the establishment of village-level committees and organisations, and helps them plan their annual programmes and activities on the basis of their specific context, problems and issues. These groups then organise mass demonstrations, exerting pressure at different levels. One of these demonstrations was the "March of 100,000 Landless People" in 2008, where more than 1,200 rural women participated in 14 days of protests in the capital city, together with the different local and regional programmes of protests. In March 2011, more than 1,000 farmers spent more than one week in Kathmandu, hoping to capture the attention of the government and the political parties writing the new constitution, to ensure that it would enshrine women's right to land. In all cases, participants have been very motivated by the struggle for their rights. Perhaps the most interesting thing to see is that they not only raise the issues they want to address, but also suggest solutions to solve their problems, putting the rights of farmers and tillers at the centre of every discussion – and even managing the logistics of their efforts.

Simultaneous efforts focused on the development of partnerships have led to the "Strategic Plan for the Land Rights Movement 2009-2013", in which different development organisations stated their commitment to providing long-term support to Nepal's land rights movement. Drawing on CSRC's "Organisational, Strategic and Operational Plan", a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on January 2009 between CSRC and five partners: ActionAid, CARE, CCO/CIDA, Danida/HUGOU, and Oxfam. The Lutheran World Federation also joined this strategic partnership from 2011. All these organisations agreed to pool the necessary resources (with a "basket funding approach") in order to promote security of tenure for land-poor women and men through pro-poor land reform. This "Strategic Partnership" has been moving ahead with significant success in terms of recognition by the state, trust by right holders, commitment by development partners and ownership of right holders. The International Land Coalition (ILC) has also supported short-term initiatives.

Recipe for success

Nepal's land rights movement has been relatively successful during the past few years. Thanks to intensive lobbying and advocacy, land has been included as a major agenda point in the Interim Constitution of Nepal (which now has a provision to "pursue a policy of adopting scientific land reform programmes by gradually ending feudalistic land ownership", while at the same time providing that "the State shall pursue a policy of providing a minimum required piece of land for settlement to the liberated bonded labourers…"). As part of its long-term objectives, the country's Three-year Interim Plan 2007-2010 aimed "to contribute to the national economy on the basis on just land ownership and a scientific land management system through implementation of scientific land reform." The plan also outlined a strategy to materialise these objectives while asserting that the government would formulate appropriate laws and build institutional mechanisms to provide land to the families of landless people, tenants and squatters. One of these strategies was to constitute a High Level Commission, which is already operative. More specifically, the movement has also facilitated the direct transfer of land ownership. By the end of 2010, a total of 13,484 tenant families had obtained land titles to 3,034 hectares of land.

There is still a lot to do. This experience in Nepal, however, makes us confident that working together will lead to even greater results.

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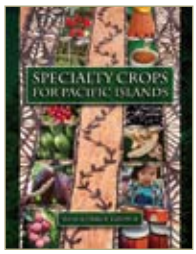


Speciality crops for pacific islands

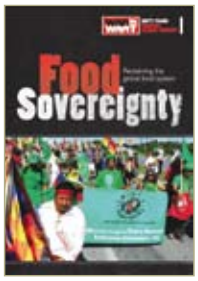
C.R. Elevitch (ed.), 2011. Permanent Agriculture Resources. Holualoa, Hawaii. 558 pages.

If you are interested in traditional and promising new crops in the Pacific Islands then this book is a must have. It is an encyclopaedic compendium on ethnobotany, and a hands-on practical manual, covering 26 Pacific Islands crops. Each chapter, composed by an expert on the crop, is richly illustrated, and contains written parts on the characteristics of the crop, how it is cultivated, its application in agroforestry systems, how it is produced commercially, how it can be produced on a small scale, and examples of successes. The objective of the book is to contribute to the conservation and enrichment of traditional Pacific Island agroforestry systems that are threatened with replacement by mechanised, chemical-intensive monocultures.

Payments for ecosystem services and food security

D. Ottaviani and N.E. Scialabba, 2011. FAO, Rome. 281 pages.

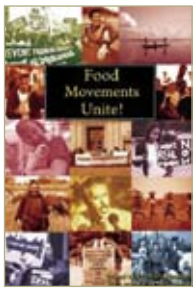
Poverty is linked to food security, which is linked to farm production, which in turn relies on "critical regulating ecosystems services". These include soil formation, micro-organism activity, erosion control, nutrient cycling, crop pollination and pest and disease control. In modern intensive agriculture the pressure put on provisioning services to increase production is damaging these regulating and supporting services. This can seriously affect food production. This book explores how a new generation of payment for ecosystem services (PES), one that specifically focuses on agriculture, can provide incentives for farmers to support critical regulating and supporting services. The book draws on the lessons learnt from old PES schemes in the European Union and OECD countries.



Food sovereignty: Reclaiming the global food system

S. Branford, 2011, War on Want, London, 54 pages.

In 2009, over one billion people were officially classified as living in hunger for the first time in history. The author attributes this to the global expansion of corporate capitalism which encompasses the Green Revolution and the transformation of national systems to export oriented agriculture. This has resulted in more land grabs and more poverty. The proposed alternative is food sovereignty, defined as "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems". The report presents cases in Brazil, Sri Lanka, Mozambique and the U.K., where farmers have successfully implemented different principles and are harvesting the benefits.



Food movements unite!: Strategies to transform our food systems

E. Holt-Giménez (ed.), 2011. Food First, Oakland, 323 pages.

"The corporate food regime dominating our planet's food system is environmentally destructive, financially volatile and socially unjust." This is the opening sentence of Eric Holt-Gimenez's introduction. The book presents the views of farmers' unions, consumer groups, NGOs and community organisations that are committed to food justice, food democracy and food sovereignty. This book seeks to derive "the new norm" from the fragmented collection of hopeful alternatives so as to further the organisation of local food movements into global alliances. The book includes chapters by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, leaders from La Via Campesina and the MST, and the president of the Millennium Institute.

The politics of seed in Africa's Green Revolution: Alternative narratives and competing pathways

I. Scoones and J. Thompson (eds.), 2011. IDS, Brighton. 120 pages.

The call for a "Uniquely African Green Revolution" is gaining momentum. The objective of this new Green Revolution is to increase food production by combining the same technologies that failed under the "old" Green Revolution with commodity markets. Networks of entrepreneurs are to deliver inputs and technologies. This Institute of Development Studies bulletin takes the case of cereal seed systems to explore commonly overlooked questions, namely: whose interests are being served by current policies and what alternatives are being excluded? The bulletin also consists of articles that look at how the Green Revolution is transforming seed systems in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

Climate change and food systems resilience in sub-Saharan Africa

L.L. Ching, S. Edwards and N.E. Scialabba, 2011. FAO, Rome. 448 pages.

Modern agriculture has weakened the ability of agro-ecosystems to adapt to climate change and weather fluctuations. Intensifying production with chemical fertilizer is also unsustainable due to escalating fertilizer prices. The authors of this book advocate production intensification through "ecological agriculture" practices. It is argued that these practices will enable farmers to break out of poverty, increase food security and enhance food system resilience. This is supported with studies on Asia's Green Revolution; trends in African agricultural knowledge, science and technology; the impact of trade policy and climate change on agriculture; and successful, on-the-ground experiences with ecological agriculture.

Land grabbing

Recent literature that estimates the magnitude of land grabbing and/or explores what is driving it, how it is affecting small-scale farmers and what can be done, include "Land tenure and international investments in agriculture" (by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, 2011), "Land and power: the growing scandal surrounding the new wave of investments in land" (Bertram Zagema, 2011), "Land grabbing in Africa and the new politics of food" (Future Agricultures policy brief 41, 2011) and "The great land grab: Rush for world's farmland threatens food security for the poor" (S. Daniel and A. Mittal, 2009). Literature that presents alternatives to international land acquisitions include the "Access to land and the right to food" report (O. de Schutter, 2010), "Responding to land grabbing and promoting responsible investment in agriculture" (IFAD, 2011) and "Alternatives to land acquisitions: Agricultural investment and collaborative business models" (edited by L. Cotula and R. Leonard, 2010). Both the "Development" journal (volume 54, issue 1, 2011) and "The Journal of Peasant Studies" (volume 38, issue 2, 2011) have dedicated a special on land grabbing, and the website of the "International Conference on Global Land Grabbing" (held this year by Future Agricultures) contains articles that cover several aspects

of the topic. "A historical perspective on the global land rush" (by the International Land Coalition, 2011) relates the current wave of land grabs to the past legacy of colonisation and neo-liberal reforms. (LvdB)

What shade will Rio+20 provide?

Twenty years ago, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Many of the recommendations made in 1992 are still valid today. In June 2012 government delegations and numerous others will go to Rio again, to take stock of what has been achieved over the past twenty years and to address new challenges. All over the world preparations are already in full swing for the 2012 conference, "Rio+20".

Text: Laura Eggens and Edith van Walsum

Rio+20 will focus on an economy model that promotes sustainable development and aims at eradicating poverty (a "green economy"), and on the institutional framework required to meet these goals. Participants Participants at the conference will include high level government representatives of UN member states, together with non-government stakeholders who participate in formally constituted "Major Groups", representing farmers, civil society organisations, women and indigenous peoples, etc.

Myrna Cunningham, Centre for Autonomy and Development of Indigenous Peoples (CADPI)

"Everyone has the right to participate in decision making around food. We reject development models that do not respect this"

Greenwashing or a historical opportunity?

There are those who fear that Rio+20 is going to be a repeat of the 1992 conference and become another event where the necessities of eradicating poverty and saving the environment are discussed, without leading to any concrete results. They wonder if Rio+20 will lead to "green" measures that are built upon the existing system, which has caused much of the problems we are trying to solve. The Women's Major Group has emphasised that a "green economy" need not necessarily contribute to poverty eradication and sustainable development. There is a risk that the term "green economy" will be used for "greenwashing" existing unsustainable economic practices. Instead of this, Rio+20 needs to focus on questioning and fundamentally transforming the current economic paradigm.

From a more optimistic perspective, others argue that Rio+20 offers a historic opportunity to transform abstract commitments into concrete actions. Rio+20 can be a platform for fundamental transformation. There are real opportunities to upscale sustainable practices and to support viable local food systems.

# of green

No green economy without sustainable family farming Agriculture is both part of the problem and part of the solution. How do we move from the present un-sustainable global food and agriculture system towards a much more diverse system that is fair and respects small-scale family farmers and environments across the globe? Cosmetic changes are not enough. The Major Groups of farmers, civil society organisations and women are making strong cases for sustainable family farming, regionalised food systems, and for upscaling time-tested agro-ecological approaches. Agriculture can nourish everybody with healthy, diverse and culturally appropriate food, provided the right political choices are made. The outcomes of Rio+20 need to support rights and access to resources for women and indigenous people. Land grabs need to stop, and food production should not be compromised for biofuel production. Public funding for agricultural development should be restored, including support for (participatory) knowledge generation and dissemination.

Building a roadmap We need a roadmap informed and inspired by the concrete experiences of farmers. Both successes and failures (which tell us the obstacles to upscaling sustainable practices) need to be widely shared and systematised. Rio+20 should give a boost to efforts that document crucial practical experience. Let us use *Farming Matters* to share convincing experiences and reach out to policymakers and policy advocates, providing them with the ammunition they need. We ask you, our readers and authors, farmers and scientists; those with a deep and experiential understanding of sustainable farming, to make your voices and your experiences heard in *Farming Matters*. *Family farming does matter in a truly Green Economy.*

Farming Matters forms part of a global network of magazines: www.agriculturesnetwork.org. Together we reach more than half a million agricultural practitioners in 194 countries. This is a strong platform. You can influence global thinking on agriculture. Share your views, dreams and practical experiences! The more inspiring contributions we get, the stronger the message that *Farming Matters* will convey in Rio will be.

Will we hear what small-scale farmers have to say?
Photo: ILEIA

Shuhao Tan, Renmin University of China

"The global mode of agriculture has dismally failed us"

Olivier de Schutter, Special UN Rapporteur for the Right to Food

"There is an urgent need to bring a balanced perspective on small farmers to the Rio+20 debate. The disbelief of policymakers must be challenged head on"

Farmers' access to land is greatly dependent on the laws and regulations on land ownership and land use in a country. But legislation is often not enough to ensure fair and equal distribution of property, whereby farmers can feel secure of their rights to the land they work. Here are some examples from different countries.

China

Land and bargaining power

Following the Household Responsibility System in China, started in the 1980s, households are seen as a production unit. Though efficient in terms of production and incomes, several years of implementation have revealed a gender bias: land rights are often in the hands of husbands and the husband's family. In 2002, the "Rural Land Contract" law was passed, paying special attention to women's land rights, and ensuring women's rights to land after they are married, divorced or widowed. Implementation of this policy has not always been easy, but now it is possible to see that, as more and more men migrate to earn off-farm money, agricultural decisions are more often taken by women. In 2006, 39% of the land in western China was registered in the name of women, and this number is rising. The problem is that women's bargaining power does not seem to increase with land ownership. Although a household's income increases significantly when women own land, their own bargaining power, or even their level of participation in public activities, does not. Beyond giving access to land, improving the impact of the 2002 law means having programmes and resources that are directly aimed at women, and not just at "farmers".

Photo: Jorge Chavez-Tafur

More information? Contact Yuan Juanwen at the Guizhou College of Finance and Economics, Guiyang, China. E-mail: yuanjuanwen@yahoo.com

Guatemala

"Long life to land rights!"

In the hills of San Juan Sacatepequez, Guatemala, the fight for community lands, water and forests has always been a life and death struggle. When communities organise themselves and demand recognition for their land rights against big companies (especially mines), their leaders are often harassed, kidnapped or even killed. In February 2011, villagers in San Miguel Ixtahuacan organised a protest march in order to pressure the Guatemalan government into complying with the precautionary measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in May 2010, particularly the temporary suspension of a mine operating nearby. Unable to get the protection of the municipal police forces, villagers had to fight hired thugs. Local organisations are therefore now calling for the services of the Peace Brigades (PB) to help protect their leaders in order to ensure the continuation of their fight. Although unhappy that "security" has become a central issue in the struggle for land rights, village leaders are happy to receive the protection and support which is needed for their leaders and their organisations to continue their fight.

More information? Contact Gustavo Molina at the Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, Wageningen. E-mail: gustavoadolfo.molinaordonez@wur.nl

Photo: Taringa! / DWN

Tanzania

No woman's land

Even though all Tanzanian land is formally state property, farmers do exert private usage rights. However, very little of this land is documented in the name of women. A decentralised system for land administration, where local village councils are authorised to document land holdings and identify landholders of un-documented plots at public land acquisition processes, was set up to benefit formerly discriminated social groups. Theoretically, this should include women. Nonetheless, the final decisions of these local government bodies remain in the hands of traditional – i.e. male – village elders and leaders. Hence, very little of this land is documented in the name of women. Women's weak tenure security and social capital is deeply rooted in traditional inequalities of rights between men and women. Culturally determined gender roles limit women's access to information and bargaining power. Additionally, constraints in terms of time, mobility and financial resources, leave them particularly vulnerable to losing out with regard to rights of tenure. Despite the positive increasing trend of documenting land holdings, real commitment to include women as land owners still needs plenty of attention. Luckily, this attention is on the rise.

Photo: Laura Berner

More information? Contact Laura Berner at the University of Amsterdam. E-mail: laura.berner@email.de

Ethiopia

The right to use land

Ethiopia's constitution protects smallholders from the risk of being evicted from the land that they work, but this has not stopped land grabs from taking place. Since all land in Ethiopia is owned by the state, it could be reclaimed without the consent of individual land users. Since 2005, farmers are much less vulnerable to these forced evictions. The land use rights of individual farming households in the Amhara region of Ethiopia has improved considerably following the adoption of various pieces of legislation at federal and regional levels. These stipulate that farmers have a perpetual user right to their agricultural holdings, which is strengthened by issuing land use certificates and maintaining land use registers. Moreover, two local level institutions were created to facilitate the implementation of this new legislation related to rural land administration and use. It shows that these changes have increased farmers' security in land usage: farming households have massively started planting trees in and around their fields. Farmers are now more certain that the trees they plant for fuel, timber and fodder will be theirs in years to come.

Photo: Olaf Verheijen

More information? Contact Olaf Verheijen at the Sustainable Water Harvesting and Institutional Strengthening in Amhara (SWHISA) Project. E-mail: olafverheijen@hotmail.com

The silent partners' new voice

Evidence suggests that foreign or private investments in land in Nicaragua have not occurred at the same rate as in other countries, but there are many competing claims to land. Coffee co-operatives have secured higher prices, helping vulnerable populations, but most co-operative members are men. Alternative approaches are helping those worst off: women farmers.

Text and photos: Maille Faughnan

Nicaragua began growing coffee in the early 19th century, and in the following decades it became its principle crop. Since then, Nicaragua has seen different waves of land grabs, beginning in the late 1880s when European farmers acquired massive tracts of cheap mountainous land to grow this crop. One hundred years later, the Sandinista government expropriated coffee plantations from elites and gave them to newly formed co-operatives. Since the 1990s, neoliberal economic policies have facilitated the buying and selling of land, while some of the land has merely been returned to its previous private and corporate owners. Successive governments have tried to encourage private and corporate property ownership, but have also aimed to achieve greater social justice by increasing the vulnerable populations' access to land. Meanwhile, fair trade co-operatives have secured higher prices for coffee, helping vulnerable populations to retain land ownership. But with changing policies and repeated periods of land reforms, it is not surprising that there are many competing claims to land. According to Technoserve Nicaragua, an international economic development organisation, nearly 90 % of the coffee farmers in Nicaragua are small-scale producers. About half of those belong to co-operatives, according to the National Agriculture and Fishing Census. Nicaragua has improved the process of land titling and documentation, one of the biggest threats to small landholders, but this has done little for landless farmers, especially women. An estimated 39 % of rural households do not own land.

Confronting the gender gap

Although Nicaraguan women work on every aspect of coffee production, they rarely own the land they work on or make decisions about its use. The Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that women own less than 2% of Nicaragua's productive land, and scarcely 3% of women have titles to their land. Land reforms and the historical shift of communal land holdings to families situated land ownership and rights with men. Despite legal reforms regarding marital property, cultural norms perpetuate the male head of household's control over land. Land ownership has historically been a prerequisite to join agricultural co-operatives. This means that women are a minority in most Nicaraguan coffee co-operatives. Without land ownership, many women have not been eligible for government social programmes, some of which require beneficiaries to own between one and ten hectares of land.

The Central American office of the Fair Trade Labelling Organization, FLO, decided to partner with the local NGO Institute for Women and Community (IMC) to implement a thorough investigation of gender inequality and possible solutions in 20 of its partner cof-

Group of microfranchise sellers holding their favourite solar-powered products at their cooperative's headquarters.

fee co-operatives. This research reported that, on average, 25% of all co-operative members are women, but their role as leaders and decision-makers ranks much lower – at around 15%. But the main issue arising from this three-year-long research is women's overall lack of *control* over how household or co-operative resources are used, leaving them vulnerable or dependent upon a male partner. FLO and its partner co-operatives agree that the best solution to this problem is to implement strategic gender policies that aim to increase women's membership and decision-making role within the co-ops.

Changing the co-operative culture

Co-operatives are a powerful force in Nicaragua. With a total of more than 3,500 registered co-operatives (and a 75% growth since 2006), Nicaragua has more of them than any other Central American country. Critics of the system contend that co-operatives are less productive than individual farmers. But small-scale farmers are attracted to them because they permit risk sharing and large-scale social and economic initiatives. Many NGOs often prefer to work with these local partners that already have some organisational structure in place and can assume some of the responsibility of development projects. In addition, co-operatives can project a unified image or mandate, such as a focus on sustainable and organic farming – a requirement for FLO certification.

According to Nicaragua's Co-operative Law 499, passed in 2005, co-operatives should have democratic values and structures. Law 499 defines a co-operative as a democratically run and jointly owned business, formed by persons united towards common economic, social and cultural needs and goals. Yet, as FLO's research showed, "when we looked at the situation it was apparent that those at the top were men."

This disparity is increasingly recognised by women farmers. Like many women who grow coffee, Trinidad Alfaro points to the fact that only her husband belongs to the co-operative because he is the legal owner of their land. But, "as I spend 5 months every year working my family's coffee farm, I would love to join the coffee co-op and also have a say." Alfaro is especially interested in the benefits members get, "like small loans to help us through the lean months before the next harvest."

Other tangible benefits include technical training, and collective input purchases at wholesale prices. The type of support and resources often depend upon the co-operative. Some offer educational scholarships or programmes for members' children; others provide loans to purchase seeds or fertilizers. Many want to provide quality assurance of their products, and thus focus on developing infrastructure for agricultural processing.

Alfaro's family can't afford to purchase more land in her name. But she now has an opportunity to join her husband's co-operative thanks to the ingenuity of the Institute of Development, Evaluation, Assistance and Solutions (IDEAS), an international non-profit organisation that has worked in Nicaragua for over 25 years.

A new approach to increase women's membership

To increase female membership, co-operatives have three options: they can help women to buy land; encourage parents to will land to daughters; or create new paths to membership. The first two options are pretty straightforward solutions. PRODECOOP, a coffee-exporting group of 39 local co-operatives in northern Nicaragua, is getting creative with the third.

Female entrepreneurship benefits the whole family: from the daily chores to a rooftop solar system.

Zayda Treminio, the head of PRODECOOP's Gender Department, regularly keeps her eye out for new initiatives. In 2011, IDEAS approached her team, interested in training women to become "microfranchisees" who would sell solar energy products. Treminio had never heard of a "microfranchising" system, but she knew a good opportunity when she saw one, and invited IDEAS to present the project to PRODECOOP's Gender Assembly. Microfranchise is a new economic development tool that provides support systems to entrepreneurs, helping them set up and develop their nascent businesses. The representative from CCAJ, one of the co-operatives, insisted on hosting the first group of female sellers, or microfranchisees.

The idea appealed to PRODECOOP and CCAJ because it tackles several issues at once: it rewards participants with an economic opportunity and public affirmation of the hard work and leadership skills demonstrated by the co-ops' Gender Assembly. The project is also an endorsement of clean, renewable energy. The co-operatives and IDEAS saw that solar-powered lanterns and radios can improve communities' basic standard of living, as well as helping them to produce more efficiently by saving on the cost of energy inputs like kerosene.

Most importantly for women like Trinidad Alfaro, "being a microfranchisee opens the door for me to join the co-operative", with all the benefits that this brings. PRODECOOP-affiliated co-operatives are applying the principles outlined in Law 499 to offer membership to persons who provide goods and services to other co-op members, and not just to those who own land. Since their solar energy business assists the economic life of the co-operative, each microfranchisee is eligible for membership. Of the eight women who began as microfranchises with CCAJ and IDEAS this June, five were not members of the co-operative. All five women are currently applying to become members.

Towards gender equity

Helping women to join a co-operative through alternative methods offers them more than just economic benefits. It offers them a say in how their community and its most important economic resources are developed. Women express themselves and become leaders, with influence over a vast network of resources and tools to help them succeed. Co-operatives are also a formal space to address the gender discrimination that is largely social and cultural at its roots. Men and women can work side by side as colleagues.

The correlation between poverty and landlessness is why projects like the microfranchise are so important to co-operatives: they provide opportunities to acquire productive assets and join the co-operative. And once in the co-op, other programmes can help members diversify their income sources by, for example, participating in ecotourism projects.

Increasing rural women's presence in Nicaragua coffee co-operatives is by no means a panacea for their economic vulnerability. Women still need outright access to land and proper titling to the land they work. But becoming co-operative members at least gets these women's feet in the door. As co-owners of the co-op, or owners of their own business, as in the case of the microfranchisees, old gender paradigms may break down. Patterns of ownership and inheritance may shift as families increasingly recognise women's ability to manage the land. Meanwhile, women can begin amassing the capital needed to buy land, and join a two hundred-year-old Nicaraguan tradition of growing some of the world's finest coffee.

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Food scarcity *à la* Wall Street

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A day doesn't go by that the present food crisis – in which nearly a billion people are going hungry – is used as proof of the food scarcity plaguing the planet. There is scarcity – but not of food. The world produces enough food. People are going hungry today because they can't afford food, especially when prices spike. The recent extreme price volatility and price spikes cannot be explained by simple supply and demand models. In fact, there has hardly been any change in world food demand over the last three years. The falling land productivity of industrial agriculture, the spread of agrofuels diverting arable land to fuel crops, climate change and an inadequate investment in agroecology are all adversely affecting food supply. But despite their devastating impacts, these supply-side factors don't explain the extreme volatility and price spikes in global food markets seen in recent years.

Food price surges are the result of a new phenomenon: massive hoarding of food commodity derivatives. These are specialised financial products invented by powerful financial institutions. As a result, prices skyrocket because these investors have created a financially-induced demand, thereby imposing immense artificial scarcity on the global food market. In 2008 and again in 2010, prices for staple crops like rice, wheat, and corn doubled and tripled, and extended the grip of poverty and deprivation to hundreds of millions of people. And what's more, institutional investors knew their speculation was driving food prices higher.

The "financialisation" of our food began with the creation of tradable commodity indexes, which turn some of the basic necessities of life into speculative assets. The trading of agricultural commodities, which in itself serves an important function for corporations with a real stake in agricultural commodities, is taken advantage of by financial speculators. Financial speculators are merely concerned with financial profit – not the destination of the food commodity or the functionality of the global food system. On top of this, new regulations allow institutional investors to trade commodity futures contracts without position limits, disclosure requirements or regulatory oversight. With the crash of the housing bubble, followed by the economic recession, institutional investors flocked to the unregulated commodity index funds. As a result, financial capital flooded the market, taking massive positions in food and concentrating them in just a few, corporate hands – without having to report any of it!

By opening up food commodities to financial speculation, global food commodity markets have seen the most price volatility and biggest price surges ever. The Occupy Wall Street protestors are not off the mark. Wall Street has been occupying our food system for far too long – with disastrous results.

Land and Power

The global food system is broken, according to Oxfam's GROW campaign. Land grabs are a horrific symptom of this broken system. This is clearly presented in "Land and power: The growing scandal surrounding the new wave of investments in land", the recently released Oxfam report.

Text: Bertram Zagema

International investment plays a vital role in development and poverty reduction. Investment can improve livelihoods and bring jobs, services and infrastructure when it is managed responsibly within the context of an effective regulatory framework. The recent record of investment in land is very different. It tells a story of rapidly increasing pressure on land – a natural resource upon which the food security of millions of people living in poverty depends. Without national and international measures to defend the rights of people living on and off the land, too many investments have resulted in dispossession, deception, violation of human rights, and the destruction of livelihoods.

In developing countries, as many as 227 million hectares of land – an area the size of Western Europe – have been sold or leased since 2001, mostly to international investors. The bulk of these land acquisitions has taken place over the past two years, according to on-going research. This recent rise can in part be explained by the 2007–08 food prices crisis, which led investors and governments to turn their attention towards agriculture after decades of neglect. But this interest in land is not something that will pass; it is a trend with strong drivers.

Trends and drivers

Oxfam's "Land and Power" report discusses the trends and drivers behind large-scale land acquisitions, and looks in detail at five land grabs in Uganda, Indonesia, Guatemala, Honduras, and South Sudan. It aims to help understand the impact of land grabs on poor people and their communities; to identify the underlying factors between companies, local communities, and host governments; and to examine the roles played by international investors and home-country governments.

Some cases tell the story of the alleged forced eviction of over 20,000 people from their lands. Others tell how affected communities have been undermined through exclusion from decisions affecting the land they rely on. In most cases, the legal rights of those affected by the land grabs were not respected. Where alleged evictions have already taken place, the picture is bleak: conflict and loss of food security, livelihoods, homes, and futures. Most of those affected say that they have received little or no compensation and have struggled to piece their lives back together, often facing higher rents, few job opportunities, and risks to their health. The evidence is sadly consistent with many other recent studies on land grabbing.

Home and host country governments, financiers and sourcing companies, the international community and

civil society groups all have a role to play. They must address the failure at all levels to respect human rights, to steer investment in the public interest, and to respond to one of the most alarming trends facing rural populations in developing countries today. Respect for free, prior and informed consent is crucial to good land governance, and essential for poverty reduction.

Change needed National governments have failed to protect the rights and interests of local communities and land-rights holders. Instead, they seem to have aligned themselves with investors, welcoming them with low land-prices and other incentives, and even helping clear the land of people. Standards and rules appear not to have guided investments and sourcing decisions. While local communities may find recourse in one or another complaint mechanism, these seem to be underused. Overall, the response of the international community to this devastating wave of land grabbing has been weak.

The power balance has to shift in favour of those most affected by land deals. The right of communities to know and to decide must be respected by all involved. Oxfam concludes that there is a clear imperative for action at a number of levels, both to ensure that this structural shift takes place and to remedy the conflicts that arise from the types of deals described here. Considering that members of the public can put pressure on governments and companies to grow justice, and that civil society, media and academia can help to protect rights and foster transparency, the report ends with these recommendations:

- Governments should adopt internationally applicable standards on good governance relating to land tenure and management of natural resources;
- Host country governments and local authorities should promote equitable access to land and protect people's rights;
- Investors operating agriculture projects should respect all existing land use rights, avoid the transfer of land rights away from small-scale food producers, and carry out and be guided by comprehensive social and environmental impact assessments;
- Financiers of agriculture ventures and buyers of agricultural products should take responsibility for what happens in their value chains; and
- Home country governments should take responsibility for acts of originating companies abroad.

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Land in Uganda

Christine (not her real name) and her husband tell a story of how they used to grow enough food to feed their children on the land that they had farmed for over 20 years. Christine is one of the more than 20,000 people who say that they have been evicted from their homes and land in the Kiboga and Mubende districts, to make way for UK-based New Forests Company (NFC) plantations. The Ugandan National Forestry Authority (NFA) granted NFC licences for the plantation areas in 2005 and authorised the removal of the former residents. The NFA says that the people living there were illegal encroachers on forest land and that their evictions were justified. NFC maintains that locals left the land voluntarily and that, in any event, it would bear no responsibility for evictions from land licensed to it. The company told Oxfam that these "are solely in the hands of the government" and that, as a licensee, it has "very limited rights and certainly no rights to evict anyone".

NFC's operations highlight how the current system of international standards does not work. There are serious allegations of negative impacts on local villagers, which raise particular concerns given that NFC operations are supported by international investment from institutions such as the International Finance Corporation and the European Investment Bank, all of which claim to uphold high social and environmental standards. NFC presents itself as a "sustainable and socially responsible forestry company". It has applied for carbon credits for carbon offsetting, and says it creates jobs in rural areas and builds schools and health facilities as part of its community development programme.

Over 20,000 local villagers believe that they have clear legal rights to the land they occupied, and both communities have brought a case before the Ugandan High Court to protect those rights. These claims are being resisted by NFC, and neither case has been finally decided. Further, their legal pleadings refer to an executive order prohibiting the evictions, which they say remains in effect. In two court cases, the High Court considered that the communities' concerns were sufficiently urgent and their arguments sufficiently strong to justify granting orders restraining evictions, pending disposal of the full hearings. However, local communities say that evictions have continued to take place despite these orders. They describe the evictions as anything but voluntary and peaceful.

Clashing systems, common the smart

The enormous number of people living below the poverty line, the current food crisis and the land grabbing processes currently taking place throughout the world, show clearly that conventional economic wisdom does not always follow common sense. There are more than enough arguments for further developing the smart model of millions of small-scale farmers.

Text: Gine Zwart

Land is a crucial asset for people all over the world. But land is not only an economic asset: it is the means to ensure sustainable livelihoods and the economic is just one of its numerous values. However, when others, such as foreign investors, arrive with other legal frameworks, titles become of immense importance. These titles and ownership structures differ from common practice in the countries where land grabs are going on at this very moment.

Clashing systems: the common good and the individual interest

Many non-Western cultures and value systems are built on the premise that what is good for the collective is good for the individual, and this is constituted in customary systems. Customary land tenure is made up of rules that regulate behaviour and relations towards land, including trees or watering holes, which have been built upon local and often traditional social norms and networks. As described by Elinor Ostrom, the 2009 Nobel laureate for economics, these tend to be embedded in the desire for a sharing of resources for the good of the community, rather than for the individual. This is very different from the system of individual ownership and capital accumulation that comes with the current wave of so-called investments and land acquisitions.

Pastoralists, fisher folk, indigenous people, or most people in rural areas, know no better than that natural resources belong to everyone, or to some spiritual unit, and are not to be tampered with. It is an eco-centric outlook on life whereby people are part of nature, as opposed to the anthropocentric approach which dominates Western cultures, whereby people are at the centre and nature is there to serve us. The "*we belong to the earth*" or "*the earth belongs to us*" paradigms are very deeply entrenched, resulting in fundamentally different beliefs and value systems. These different worlds and value systems are now meeting each other very rapidly and creating huge and unprecedented tensions to the detriment of those living in poverty.

Are we in a necessary transition period, which will lead to us having the best of both worlds? Or will one model win over the other, leaving damage control as the only option? The current land grabs give one the feeling that the latter is the case: the western/capitalist/individualistic model will win, and the best we can do is to reduce the ensuing damage. However, the optimistic picture is that the multiple crises we are in, especially in Europe and North America, are a massive call for sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and for dismantling corporate power. Researchers, aca-

sense, and lane

demics and, notably, many practitioners, are collecting evidence and arguing that our system of individual ownership and capital accumulation is not necessarily the best system or the highest achievable: other systems can work very well, and in many cases, even better. All this gives hope.

Common sense and common economic wisdom

Common sense tells us that everybody needs to eat, and if food prices go up, one still needs to eat. Food is not like a mobile phone or a new dress whose purchase can be postponed. People need to eat everyday. Common sense tells us that 1 billion people living in poverty is unacceptable. Common sense tells us that if we put food into our cars, food prices will go up. Common sense tells us that we all want a good future for our children. Conventional economic wisdom teaches us the opposite. It teaches us that economic growth is an essential means for the creation of wealth; conventional economic wisdom teaches us that it is OK to plunder the world's natural resources, to individualise profit and socialise losses. Common economic wisdom teaches us that, at the end of the day, everyone will choose for their own short-term benefit (as Garret Hardin argued in his 1968 "Tragedy of the Commons").

As argued earlier, there are other value systems that lead to very different ways of looking at wealth creation, particularly in Africa. We see value systems there that are based on re-distribution of wealth, and not so much on growth. These value systems are based on the common good, but also on deriving rights. They define human existence on the basis of relationships and not just on the basis of property. These systems are based on cycles of life in which creation/birth, preservation and destruction/death are all equally important. Again, this is rather different from a system in which individual property and individual ownership are the highest achievable aims. Combined with our linear and result-oriented thinking, this view has led to vicious circles: wealth

A people-centred, labour-intensive and long-term approach which is highly efficient in terms of food security, institution building and poverty reduction. Photos: Leonardo van den Berg

for a few, poverty for many, waste and injustice. The fact that communal, water, pasture, tree and village rights in many non-Western societies are not understood and are described as being complex, difficult and not secure, should not be the problem of people living in poverty. It should be our problem.

Common economic wisdom is based on the theory that social dependencies and relations can be replaced by market relations, and that this is desirable and essential. This is where things go wrong. But replacing mutual dependency with market relations is not desirable at all. The current economic crisis is blatantly showing us this.

The crises we will be facing if the commercialisation of natural resources, including the current "grabs", continues at its current speed, are predictable and, arguably, permanent. More people are starting to agree. Yet most seem to see this as some kind of accidental oversight or lack of research, rather than an outcome of historical processes and systems of unspeakable injustice and power imbalance.

From short-term profits to long-term benefits.
Photos: Leonardo van den Berg and Thea Hilhorst

The "smart lane"

As mentioned, the various crises have shown that "business as usual" will only add to the existing problems, and that economic logic based on individual freedom will lead us to a situation that was not acceptable even when we were not so many – and which will be intolerable with 9 billion people. Fortunately, hunger and poverty is no longer the sole domain of organisations like Oxfam, the charities, and the "do-gooders".

While it may be true that what gets measured gets managed, we can't manage everything. So what should we measure on a finite planet? Tonnes of produce per hectare land, or the number of people lifted out of poverty? One thing is clear: if environmental and societal costs continue to be neglected and not measured, the costs in the long run will severely outweigh the profits at present. This means we need to shift our thinking: from maximising any one variable to optimising several key ones; from short-term profits to long-term benefits; from linear reasoning to cyclical thinking. In short, we need a massive value change, for which we need to learn from other value systems.

To a large extent, the systems that produce our food are based on highly industrialised, high-tech, often subsidised and mechanised large-scale production systems which need a lot of money and are easy to invest in: this is the "fast lane". At the other end we find the small-scale, often labour intensive production systems which sustain millions of people, based on centuries of local knowledge. These people do not receive subsidies, are often hungry and are being pushed into dependence on charity: this is the "slow lane". What we need is the best of both worlds: not a "fast lane" or a "slow lane", but a "smart lane" instead.

We need to freeze the footprint of food and make the large-scale industrialised model more sustainable by developing these other "smart" models. The good news is that these other models exist, and in huge numbers: they are practiced by millions of small-scale farmers, pastoralists, fisher folk and artisans. These are entrepreneurs *pur sang*, continuously finding creative and innovative solutions to survive. They are part of extremely complex networks of knowledge, practice and potential.

Their work is seen in many great examples: in those following the System of Rice Intensification (first "discovered" in the 1970s in Madagascar and now used on a wider scale in Asia) or in the "greening" process currently seen in the Sahel. Many more examples are known and have been described in this magazine, including grain banks; indexed-based weather insurance schemes; participatory plant breeding or the re-establishment of dams and wells. All of them share a people-centred, labour-intensive and long-term approach. They also need considerable investments, but are all exceptionally economical if we include all the benefits they yield in terms of food security, institution building and poverty reduction.

What is required to make this smart lane work is, first and foremost, courage and creative thinking. It requires intelligence, people, financial arrangements and network structures that we are not used to seeing. It requires listening to people and investing in them, instead of taking away their access and opportunity to earn a livelihood by "investing" in land.

In contrast to the conventional economic wisdom of the 20th century, we have to make sure the 21st century goes into history as the century of common sense – and that the smart lane becomes the new fast lane.

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Land is money

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I am witness to the butchery of land, habitat, indigenous communities and traditional farming systems in the Western Ghats, a large mountain range in south-west India. This butchery accompanies another hideous process: amalgamation and theft.

A couple of centuries ago, the Western Ghats were the home of hill tribes, vast forests, abundant wildlife and sparkling rivers. The various petty kingdoms in the plains had little to do with these remote areas, other than occasional skirmishes with the more warlike tribes, seasonal exchanges of produce and pilgrim visits to holy rivers and sacred forests. Colonial rulers – the predecessors to the neoliberal (or "neo-colonial") commodification forces currently at work – were the first to see "opportunity" in these high mountains. Over time, several massive transformations in land use patterns have taken place, not to mention ecological changes at landscape level with grievous consequences for all.

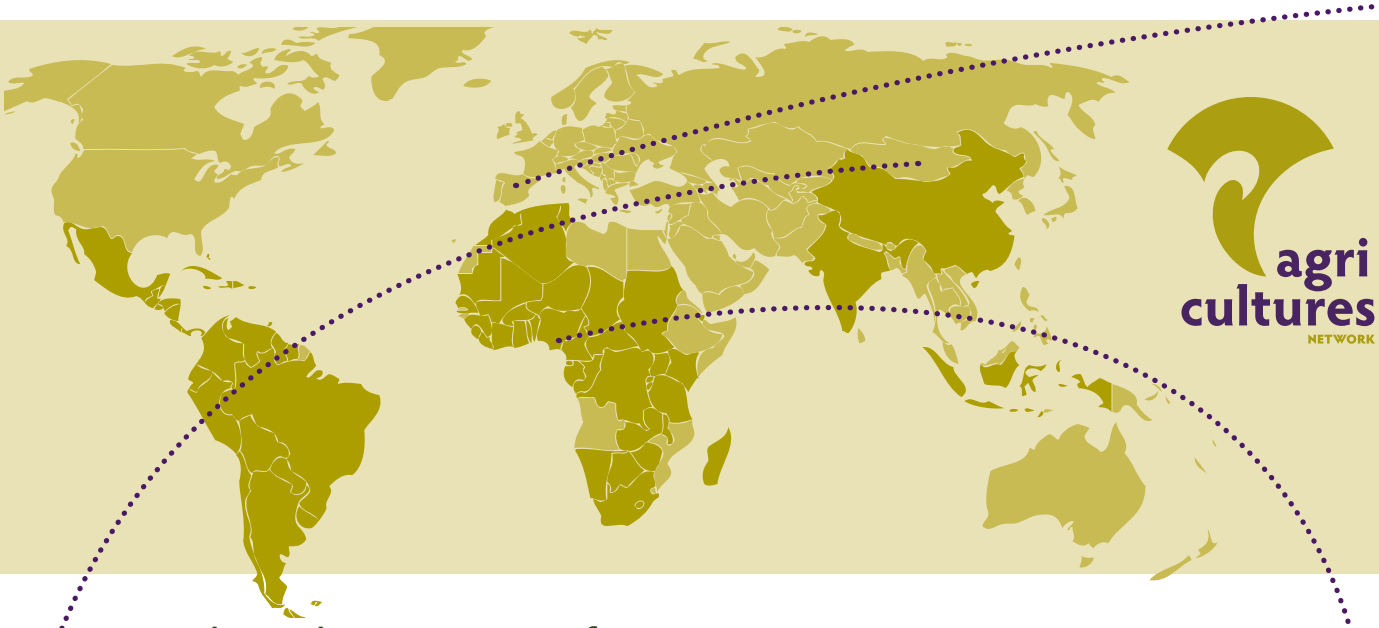
The mountains are now the destination of world tour operators. They are also being gobbled up by movie stars, politicians, resorts, back-to-nature urbanites, and a land mafia indulging in speculation with land as their currency, in a violent, turbulent and corrupt marketplace. In addition, they are being urbanised.

I've been living here for 20 years, in these once beautiful mountains. Butchery (in its current avatar) arrived after I did, after wildlife tourism, ecotourism, and plantation tourism. Tourism arrived with the crash of small-scale and cash crop farming and the abandonment of government-controlled pricing of farm products. It brought the corporate nouveau riche to their own "backyard" wildernesses, for weekend outings to "commune with nature".

A couple of years ago I started enquiring about the activities of the sub-registrar offices where land is transferred between buyer and seller. I found that each of the seven sub-registrar offices in Wayanad district (about 2500 km² in size) dealt with several thousand transfers a year: each year the number of transactions grew, each time the pieces became smaller and smaller – and each time the prices skyrocketed. Every now and again, they would be amalgamated into one big transaction by a massive hotel, a movie star or a politician.

Now, in my immediate neighbourhood, a tea farm sells at 1 million rupees an acre. A few years ago it would have been a fifth of this price. Of course this means that rural people are leaving the countryside. They are leaving independent and stable (though, not easy) lives to become consumers in the shanty towns around cities.

Who does this serve? What happens when you break the relationship between people and land, when small-scale farmers or adivasis become dependant on the state for food and water?



Land can be seen as a farmer's most precious resource, and access to land has been identified as a basic right. Ensuring these rights is particularly difficult at a time of climate, food, or economic crisis. What specific issues should be taken into account? Network colleagues shared some of their opinions.

Munkhbolor Gungaa: "Joining hands is vital"

Climate change is having a severe impact in Mongolia: pasture lands seem to have shrunk, and many water sources have disappeared, seriously affecting the traditional lifestyles of the country's nomads or "malchid". Their traditional way of life is being equally threatened by mining, particularly in the South Gobi region, and drastic changes are also being presented by some as part of the solution (see article on page 18). Should pastoralists leave this region and look for opportunities elsewhere? Or should they fight for their rights? Munkhbolor Gungaa is the director of Tsagaan Myandar, an NGO which supports Mongolian pastoralists in their efforts to protect their culture and livelihoods while improving their access to resources. She thinks that the first step is for pastoralists to agree among themselves, and the second is to join forces with others. Pastoralist leaders have been encouraged to attend meetings and events (such as the Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists that took place in India) and to join international efforts such as the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples. "This exposure is helping them see that solutions are easier to find when there is commitment and concerted efforts". Deciding what to do can be easier as part of a platform. "Joining hands is vital, and external support also helps".

Photo: Dorieke Goodijk

Fakeye Oluwaseun: "We need to continue being extra alert"

Nigeria is becoming an increasingly popular target for foreign investors

Jorge Chavez-Tafur

and agribusinesses: according to some statistics, only 40% of the land is being "used". But there is growing opposition amongst Nigerians to land grabs, partly as the result of organisations like Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria, and also as a result of the work of its members (including farmers' associations, NGOs, civil organisations and food agencies). Fakeye Oluwaseun, currently at Van Hall-Larenstein University, highlights the campaigns and rallies that these organisations are carrying out in order to make more people aware of what is happening, and the consequences of these land deals. "One of its major successes has been to influence the passing of a bill meant to control the sale of land to foreign investors. This is a way to make sure that deals do not severely affect farmers, and that environmental factors are also taken into account." Investors are expected to help with infrastructure facilities and food processing activities, providing jobs for the local populations. "This is all welcome. But advocacy organisations need to continue being extra alert: foreign investors in the country are known for not following the rule of law." The legal structures for enforcing it need to be strengthened further.

Isabel García Martínez: "Thinking about the future"

As in many other regions in Europe, land prices in the south of Spain have increased dramatically during the past ten years. Many analysts see this as one of the main reasons behind the current economic crisis. But another important effect is that young farmers find it almost impossible to obtain access to land. Those who do not inherit land from their parents see no other alternative but to leave for the cities, looking for better opportunities – even when much land in the villages remains unused and unproductive because their "old" owners feel unable or unwilling to farm. With support from the European Union, the *Junta de Andalucía*, the regional government, is running a project that aims to help this group of farmers acquire land for farming – basically by providing them with subsidies; facilitating access to loans and

microcredit; and reducing the taxes involved. "Their objective is to promote a 'generational renewal' by helping young farmers to buy their own land", explained Isabel García Martinez, working at Quality & Cargo Survey in Almería. During the past few years, the number of young and female farmers has increased in the countryside as they have had the opportunity to buy or rent plots. "These policies have been successful, but we have to be sure that they continue. Land prices have not gone down, and it is still very difficult to get started. In any case, it is good to see that local politicians are also thinking about the future."

> "Solutions are easier to find when there is commitment and concerted actions"

COLOPHON

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The authors have ultimate responsibility, however, for the content of individual articles.

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"PERHAPS NOTHING ILLUSTRATES THE INEQUITY AT THE HEART OF THE FOOD SYSTEM MORE CLEARLY THAN THE CASE OF LAND"

Oxfam International's June 2011 report: "Growing a better future: Food justice in a resource-constrained world".

"We have no risk of losing our lands, and that's basically because we follow our traditional ways"

Khalifa D. Mbaga, farmer, Lekitatu village, Meru district, Arusha, Tanzania, referring to the important role of the village council and of the local Land Tribunal.

"ENSURING COMMUNITIES' ACCESS TO LAND AND INVESTING IN LOCAL SMALL-SCALE FOOD PRODUCERS IS ESSENTIAL TO FEED THE WORLD SUSTAINABLY IN THE FUTURE"

Kirtana Chandrasekan, Friends of the Earth International's Food Sovereignty Coordinator, speaking at the presentation of a petition to the FAO committee on world food security for new rules to protect communities affected by land grabs. Rome, October 17th, 2011.

"The close ties of indigenous peoples with the land must be recognised and understood as the fundamental basis of their cultures, their spiritual life, their integrity and their economic survival... their relations to the land are not merely a matter of possession and production but a material and spiritual element, which they must fully enjoy even to preserve their cultural legacy and transmit it to future generations"

Paragraph 49 of the 2001 judgment of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case of the Mayagna (Sumo) Awas Tingni Community v Nicaragua, the leading case in the jurisprudence of the court on the communal property rights over ancestral land by members of indigenous communities.

"In an age when sustainable development is one of the ways to tackle global problems, land grabbing poses a serious threat to future generations"

Khadija Razavi, Executive Director of the Centre for Sustainable Development (CENESTA), speaking at the UN Conference to Combat Desertification. Changwon, South Korea, October 23rd, 2011.

agri cultures NETWORK

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