

Transnational Land Deals and Local Livelihoods in Tanzania

Martina Locher, University of Zurich, JACS East Africa
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Ongoing large-scale agricultural land deals by foreign investors in Africa and other poor regions have triggered a lively debate on their impacts in host countries, particularly on potential benefits and risks for local people.

Recently, there has been an increase in private and governmental land acquisitions mainly for the purpose of large-scale food and bio-fuel production. Impacts on rural livelihoods in host countries such as Tanzania might include new income opportunities, improved technologies and infrastructure, but also violations of (formal and informal) land rights, decreasing access to natural resources, and increased food insecurity.



Photo 1: Labourer working on a sugar plantation (Morogoro Region, photo by M. Timpe)

This PhD study aims to:

- provide an overview on large-scale agricultural land deals in Tanzania and the related national policy framework
- analyse the land transfer process with focus on involved institutions at different scale
- analyse socially differentiated implications for local livelihoods by two case studies (photo 1)



Photo 2: Teak plantation in Morogoro Region: Who had land use rights in this area previously – and is therefore entitled to compensation: An individual, a community, a village, the state? (Photo by M. Timpe)

Company (and crop)	District	Acquired land
AgroEconomy (Sugar cane) Swedish (Earlier: SEKAB Bioenergy Tanzania)	Bagamoyo	8,000 ha
BioShape (Jatropha) Dutch	Kilwa	34,000 ha
FELISA Company Ltd (Oil palm, sunflower) Belgian / Tanzanian	Kigoma	4,258 ha
Sun Biofuels Ltd (Jatropha) British	Kisarawe	8,211 ha

Figure 1: Biofuel companies with land acquisition in Tanzania

Preliminary findings:

- From earlier projected 20 biofuel land deals, only four seem to have been established (figure 1). Most of the other plans were withdrawn. Reasons are the global financial crisis, the controversy on biofuels and investment insecurity due to announced but still unpublished national biofuel guidelines.
- While there has been a lively public debate about new biofuel projects, there is less awareness on land deals for other plantations, although suspected implications are similar. Foreign timber plantations e.g. cover areas as large as biofuel projects (figure 2).
- The land tenure system is complex and the new legislation leaves room for interpretation, contributing to confusion in the land transfer process (photo 2).
- Lack of detailed land use plans inhibits the government from channelling investments to preselected appropriate areas (photo 3).

Company	District	Acquired land
Kilombero Valley Teak Company British / Finish	Kilombero, Ulanga	28,132 ha
The New Forests Company British / South African	Kilolo	6,000 ha
Green Resources Norwegian	Kilombero, Lindi, Mufindi, Pangani	56,500 ha

Figure 2: Timber plantation companies with land acquisition in Tanzania



Photo 3: Potential land for agricultural production through foreign investment? Or reserve for future small-scale farming by local people? (Tanga Region, photo by M. Locher)