Impact of Large Scale Land Acquisition on Equitable and Sustainable Development in Ethiopia

PhD student: Maru Shete
Supervisors: Annelies Zoomers, Ton Dietz, Marcel Rutten

Research

The flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in agriculture to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) has increased substantially since 2007. The global food, energy and financial crisis motivated developed countries rich in capital but limited in land resources to invest in poor countries with abundant natural resources (GRAIN 2008). Especially, the 2007/08 price boom in food commodities has motivated food import dependent countries to look for option to produce food commodities in countries where there are abundant land and water resources as their food security strategy (IFPRI 2009; World Bank 2011). Zoomers (2010), in her article of “globalization and the foreignisation of space”, extended the drivers of global land grabs into seven different processes. There are mixed views whether such investment activities are beneficial to target countries. Some argue that FDI in agriculture will create opportunity for “sustained” and “broad-based development” through enhancing technology transfer, increasing domestic availability of food supply and creating employment opportunities provided that inward investment is well-managed (World Bank 2011). Others (Mersha 2009; Grojnowski 2010; Fitzgerald 2010; Rice 2009; Mihretie 2010; McLure 2009) criticized it as “land grabbing”, “bio-colonialism”, “agro-colonialism” etc. Except some media reports, little has been done following a standard and scientific procedure with adequate empirical data to verify whether such large scale land acquisitions in Ethiopia are opportunities or challenges to sustainable and equitable development to the country. This research is aimed at identifying the impact of large scale farm land acquisition by trans-national investors on equitable and sustainable development in Ethiopia.

Biography

Maru Shete Bekele did his bachelor degree in Agricultural Extension from the former Alemaya University of Agriculture in 1998 (Currently re-named as Haromaya University). He did three different master’s degrees: MA degree in Regional and Local Development Studies from Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia) in 2004; MSc degree in Development and Resource Economics from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (Norway) in 2007; and a third Msc degree in Tropical Ecology and Natural Resource Management again from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (Norway) in 2010. He has over eight years of research and teaching experience in the field of development studies. He served as a Research Director with the rank of Assistant Professor at St. Mary’s University College in Ethiopia until he started his doctoral studies at the Netherlands Academy for Land Governance (LANDac) in August 2011. In 2010, he won a research fellowship from the Future Agricultures Consortium Early Career Fellowship Program to work on land deal issues in Ethiopia. His main research area of interest is land tenure and land deal issues, impact and livelihood studies, poverty and food security issues in Africa.
Recent publications include:


