

XXIII ESRS congress Vaasa, Finland 17-21 August 2009-03-18

RC-40 mini-plenary: Theoretical perspectives on the food crises

*Food crisis, land grab and farm offshore
production:
the re-emergence of the land question*

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Outline

- Land grabs : key trends and actors
- Driving factors
- Likely impacts: rural communities, food security, environment, global food systems
- The return of land issues to the forefront of the research debate and policy agenda.

The land grab trend

- IFPRI report: between 15 and 20 million ha of farmland in developing countries have been subject to transactions or negotiations involving foreign investors since 2006.
- This surface area represents the size of France's farmland and a fifth of all the farmland of the European Union

The land grab trend: actors and motivations

1. An increasing number of developed and emerging countries, such as the Gulf countries, Libya, Japan, India, South Korea, China, which are dependent on food imports, are acquiring vast areas of agricultural land in various parts of the world for offshore farm production.
2. An important movement of private investments in foreign farmland, as an alternative and less risky source of revenue for large multinational corporations.

Main target countries

- Sub-Saharan Africa : Cameroon, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia
- Eastern Europe: Russia or Ukraine
- Latin America: Brazil, Peru
- Asia: Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan.

Driving factors

- Major changes in the international markets of certain goods and services: staple foods, agro fuels, forest resources
- Incentives from the host states and facilitations through “cooperation policies” and intergovernmental agreements
- Perception that there is plenty of land available in developing countries
- Land : source of rent for private investors (land prices following food prices)

Potential impacts and risks

- Threat on land users' rights
- Risks of exclusion and increased inequality
- Risks for food security of recipient countries
- Socio reorganization of food production:
concentration and increased pressure on labor
- Ecological risks (soil, water, human health)
- Marginalization of household-based production
systems
- Social and political conflicts

The re emergence of the land question

- Acceleration of land grabs worldwide express major changes in the global markets
- Food security through controlling land and production rather than through global trade : towards a a new trend of vertical integration of food systems?
- Increased commercial pressure on land linked to emerging markets of environmental goods and services
- Land becoming an increasingly globalized commodity.
- Renewed attention at a global scale on questions of rights to land and natural resources