

# Informing the debate on land

## Opening up and informing debates on land grabs and land deals in Africa



### Impact Stories

This is one of a series of impact stories from the Future Agricultures Consortium.

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Following the financial crisis of 2007-8 there was a growth of private sector interest in land investments. NGOs and civil society raised awareness of 'land grabbing' and there was a rise in media interest, often with use of 'killer facts' and sensational headlines.

Through its Land theme, Future Agricultures has examined the drivers and consequences of land deals through a detailed research programme, and engagement with policy makers, civil society and academics across Africa and beyond.

### Engaging with policy processes

**Pan African Parliament** Since 2011, Future Agricultures worked with the Pan African Parliament (PAP), in cooperation with the regional parliaments, on a campaign to raise awareness about large-scale investment in land, entitled Making Agricultural Investment Work for Africa: a parliamentarian's response to the land rush. Parliamentarians were engaged through a series of 5 regional seminars between 2011 and 2014.

**Land Policy Initiative** Future Agricultures is working with the LPI, an initiative seeking to promote equitable access to land and land rights in Africa, through joint events and publications aimed at policy makers. The LPI is a joint programme of a tripartite consortium of the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).



Photo: Agriculture Investment, Gender and Land in Africa conference in South Africa, 2014

## Changing the debate

In 2010, amid growing interest in 'land grabbing' in Africa and beyond, Future Agricultures helped to establish the **Land Deals Politics Initiative** (LDPI). A platform for debating and sharing evidence on land deals worldwide, the LDPI has organised two international conferences on Land Grabbing, trained researchers, published critical research, and engaged with multilateral actors in policy dialogues on land governance.

The LDPI has made 41 small grants to researchers, with a majority from Africa

Future Agricultures has also added to the evidence base on land, through working papers, a series of policy briefings, and contributing to 5 special issues of the Journal of Peasant Studies, Water Alternatives and Development and Change, as well as two JPS 'forums' (mini-issues). These include:

- Governing the Global Land Grab: The Role of the State in the Rush for Land (Development and Change)
- Water grabbing? Focus on the (re)appropriation of finite water resources (Water Alternatives)
- The New Enclosures: Critical

Perspectives on Corporate Land Deals (Journal of Peasant Studies)

- Green grabbing - a new appropriation of nature? (JPS)
- The Politics of Biofuels, Land and Agrarian Change (JPS)
- Forum on Global Land Grabbing I (JPS)
- Forum on Land Grabbing II: on methods (JPS)

These have all been widely read and cited. JPS special issues emerging from FAC-supported conferences have contributed to its top spot in the journal impact factor rankings in recent years.

## Key events

### Pan African Parliament seminars

Between 2011 and 2014, 5 seminars were held in Southern, Central, East and West Africa with parliamentarians, researchers, business representatives and civil society. The series culminated in the African parliamentary speakers' conference and a set of published declarations affirming the importance of legal frameworks, transparency, public awareness, networking and high-level support for action.

1 [future-agricultures.org/land](http://future-agricultures.org/land)

2 [uneca.org/clpa](http://uneca.org/clpa)

3 [future-agricultures.org/events/aiglia2014](http://future-agricultures.org/events/aiglia2014)

4 Evaluation of the Future Agricultures Consortium, January 2015

### International conferences on Land Grabbing

The Land Deals Politics Initiative organised two international conferences in April 2011 and October 2012, bringing together social movements, activists, policy makers and concerned academics. The second conference included a keynote address by the recently-appointed Director-General of the UN FAO, José Graziano da Silva.<sup>1</sup>

### Conference on Land Policy in Africa

The Future Agricultures Land theme contributed to the Land Policy Initiative (LPI)'s Conference on Land Policy in Africa<sup>2</sup>, with several of

our researchers presenting findings and discussing policy implications. Held in Addis Ababa in November 2014, the conference was the first of its kind on the continent.

### Agricultural Investment, Gender and Land in Africa

This conference<sup>3</sup> in Cape Town, March 2014, was convened by FAO, PLAAS, Future Agricultures, the Land Policy Initiative (LPI) of the African Union, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. It brought together 116 participants from 17 countries.

## Building capacity among early career researchers

Future Agricultures has helped to support a new generation of researchers carrying out empirical, on-the-ground research. Through the LDPI, 41 small grants were made to researchers, with a majority from Africa, enabling them to carry out small-scale, focused projects in 14 African countries, supported by mentoring from experienced academics.

75% of them published their research as LDPI working papers and 40% also went on to publish related journal articles and book chapters. A majority of these researchers said that the small grants had helped them to access career opportunities, and had strengthened their connections with other researchers in the field.<sup>4</sup>

This is one of a series of impact case studies drawn from an independent evaluation of the Future Agricultures, which was carried out by Upper Quartile for the UK Department for International Development and published in 2015. Find out more at [future-agricultures.org/impact](http://future-agricultures.org/impact)