Informing the debate on land
Opening up and informing debates on land grabs and land deals in Africa

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).
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.

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.

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.

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, 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 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.

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