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Global Landgrabs, Agribusiness and the Commercial Smallholder: A West African perspective

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In the last few years there has been a growing concern with investment in large-scale estate agriculture, particularly within Africa, and its impact on eroding land rights and livelihoods of smallholders. This tends to regard investment in large-scale agriculture as a perverse aberration, which undermines the equity prevalent in customary tenure systems and recent policy frameworks concerned with the harmonisation of customary and statutory tenure, and strategies concerned with the promoting smallholder agriculture and social participation in agricultural development. However, by presenting these developments as an aberration and in attempting to find a referential moral economy within the precepts of exiting policies, this approach reaffirms the rhetorical claims of neoliberal paradigms on agricultural development, without subjecting them to a critical analysis. Moreover this tends to result in a highly partisan (and patronising) framework in which new investors from the East and the Middle East are depicted as not understanding the refined nuances and morality of the (neoliberal) development policies that have been elaborated in western countries and promoting unequal development. As a recent *Spore* (the news organ of CTA Foundation of the Netherlands) cover story pontificates:

> While donor countries and the major organisations are attempting to take a clear and common position on official development assistance (ODA), new players are muddying the waters, often showing scant interest in the rules set in place with such difficulty by traditional donors. Nowadays, ODA is only extended to countries that can offer proof of good governance and democracy… But their efforts to take a moral stand are out of kilter with the approach taken by the new arrivals, who feel no obligation whatsoever to respect the rules of the game.
>
> Experts point out that China has to feed 20% of the world's population, though it only has 7% of the Earth's arable land… Its agricultural development assistance is often geared towards increasing output to feed its people. Cases in point include rice production programmes already launched in Cameroon and others planned for Mozambique and Tanzania.[1]

A second tendency, is to link these developments with the 2008 global food and financial crises (GRAIN 2008), in which land grabbing is seen to specifically emerge out of the need for emerging states to secure food supplies for their huge populations, in a period marked by huge price fluctuations and price hikes in international food markets. In this framework, the rise of new agricultural sectors, such as biofuels and need for investors to find new fields for

1 "Agricultural Aid: Donors break rank", *Spore* no 145: February 2010, p.1

investment in the wake of the financial crisis has made land an attractive field for speculative investment, increasing the demand for agricultural land. These developments are seen as producing a distinct new trajectory for accumulation beyond the norms established by transnational agribusiness:

> The food crisis coupled with the broader financial crisis has turned control over land into an important new magnet for private investors. We're not talking about typical transnational agribusiness operations, where Cargill might invest in a soya bean crushing plant in Mato Grosso in Brazil. We're talking about a new interest in acquiring control over farmland itself. There are two main players here: the food industry and, much more significantly, the finance industry. (GRAIN 2008:7).

In contrast with the strategies of transnational agribusiness, which are seen as opening up new opportunities for smallholders, it is argued that the recent expansion of investment in large-scale agriculture will result in the demise of smallholders: "For these lands will be transformed from smallholdings or forests, whatever they may be, into large industrial estates connected to large far-off markets. Farmers will never be real farmers again, job or no job" (GRAIN 2008: 9). From this standpoint the solution is to find scenarios of best practices within agribusiness that do not expropriate land, such as contract farming and other outsourcing arrangements, which the new investors can adopt (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010).

These concerns result in an ahistoric framework, which fails to examine the impact of liberalisation policies on African agriculture, and the main trends and development within the emergence of transnational agribusiness and agrarian accumulation from the 1980s and 2000s, beyond an uncritical acceptance of the precepts of good governance. They fail to examine the relationship between policy frameworks, processes of accumulation in agriculture, power relations, property rights, the relative influences and pressures that agribusiness can exert over policy formulation at national and global levels, and the major transformations that have occurred in the emergence of deregulation of agricultural investment and emergence of global market chains. They assume that prior to the emergence of global landgrabs there were no notable problems of social differentiation, land loss, insecurity in livelihoods, and expropriation within the agrarian sector. In place of this static framework, this paper seeks to develop a historical analysis of the major patterns of change within the agrifood system and examine how this has influenced the configurations of smallholders, large estates, hired labour, property relations, and patterns of investment in agricultural production and trade, and the impact upon processes of the social differentiation of smallholders.

As Bernstein (2004) points out, current debates about land reform are structured around productivity growth in farming, rural poverty and labour. At the core of these debates are controversies about the relative efficiency of large-scale and small farmer agriculture. This has led to a school of thought ("neo-classical populism") that merges ideas about efficiency and equity (Bernstein 2004). This stresses that the comparative advantage of large-scale agriculture only exists because of political distortions, and when these distortions are removed an "inverse relation" exists in which small farms, with access to markets and information, are more efficient (Lipton 1993, 1977, Griffin *et. al*. 2002, Binswanger *et. al*. 1995). This conception of the "inverse relation" has been challenged on the basis of lack of empirical evidence, or the fact that this confuses size of farming with scale of farming (Byers 1979, Sender and Johnson 2004). However, this refutation of the empirical basis of the "inverse relation" does not in itself prove that large-scale agriculture is more efficient. More importantly, the importance of scale is implicitly recognised in the neoliberal market interpretation of the "inverse relation", which states this theorem explicitly in relation to commercial smallholder farmers, that is farmers integrated into commodity and input markets with access to market information. This conception of the efficiency of commercial smallholders builds upon the development and conception of the American family farm, which is a highly capitalised venture, subject to intense competition and periodic crises that result in the exit of less competitive family farms from production (Vogeler 1981). Furthermore this conception of the efficiency of commercial smallholders has also been built into different configurations of relations between smallholders and large-scale agriculture, reflecting the rise of agribusiness, in which it is the integration of linkages rather than the integrity of smallholders that results in efficiency (Lipton 1993, Binswanger and Deininger 1993). Much confusion has existed on the relationship between smallholders and commercial smallholders, but in recent years the World Bank has clarified the relationship between efficient farming and commercial smallholders, depicting a socially differentiated rural society, in which market efficiency dictates that more efficient smallholders displace the less efficient (World Bank Development Report 2008). Over the last twenty years there has been a significant shift in discourses about efficiency, from concerns with implementing redistributive land reform to introducing barriers of entry to export markets that displace less efficient smallholders.

Apart from productivity gains, the inverse relationship is also about exploitation and the ability of smallholder family farms to withstand low margins of productivity, to absorb transaction costs, and accept exploitation of their own labour to maintain their autonomy. This forms part of an agrarian debate with a long history in Africa, which in some respects came to define the character of colonial rule. In certain periods concerns with equity have been about integrating autonomous producers into markets, at other times about the exploitative nature of these relations and the need for state interventions to guarantee agricultural development and stable prices, or the need to remove state controls to enable smallholders to compete on open markets and realise their potential. Concerns about efficiency have been about the ability of peasant producers to produce cheaply or the need for interventions to increase productivity and the quality of output.

This paper examines the major developments within agriculture in West Africa. It traces the relationship between large-scale estate agriculture and smallholders in different epochs as a means to understanding discourses about the land question and its underpinning by debates about efficiency, equity, the integration of smallholder production into capitalist food markets, and expropriation and displacement. It examines the historical transitions in agrarian policies through three phases: domination by mercantile trading companies from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s; state interventions in agriculture from the 1940s to the 1980s, and then the emergence of transnational agribusiness, supermarket chains and neoliberal policy paradigms in the contemporary period. This is followed by an analysis of the impact of agribusiness on smallholder production and access to land, with specific case studies drawn from particular *filières* (value chains and networks of producers) and *filières* within specific countries, including coffee, Ivoirian cocoa, and pineapple and oil palm production in Ghana. This argues that the general patterns within agribusiness are moving towards larger-scale production, increasing barriers of production for small farmers, lower costs of production, and expropriation of land to make way for more intensive export-oriented producers linked into agribusiness chains. Thus, the rise of investments in large-scale agriculture conforms and responds to openings created by the trends and patterns of economic liberalisation within agricultural policy, rather than reflecting a counter aberrant trend. The rise of investment in large-scale agriculture needs to be problematised within the context of the contemporary agrifood system rather than analysed in isolation.

The West African path: The myth of the autonomous egalitarian peasant producer

West Africa has often been presented as a model of enlightened colonial policy in which colonial authorities sought to protect Africans from the destructive influences of capitalism and modernity, and protect independent peasant farmers from capitalist expropriation of the land. West Africa thus represents the quintessential image of the autonomous peasant production frontier responding to the opportunities of the world market (Hailey 1956). Unlike in Eastern and Southern Africa there were no frontiers of white settler farmers in British West Africa, and limited French settlers in the French colonies of Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. Unlike in Central Africa the West African colonies were not allocated to concession companies to develop. However, the lack of a settler frontier did not mean that agrarian development was equitable, and the rhetoric of preserving African cultures and the cohesion of community often served to mask forced labour, the political coercion of a peasantry, and the widespread use of various forms of hired labour in export crop production. The peasant frontier was beset by a number of problems, which led to attempts to reform agrarian policy along more developmental lines, resulting in state intervention in agrarian production during the 1940s.

The land question under imperial domination in West Africa rose in the context of the gold boom in the Gold Coast in the 1880s and 1890s, speculation in concessions for the prospects of gold, rubber and timber, and the need to regulate land transactions for European firms. Without development of institutions for regulating land transactions, European investors found it difficult to gain clearly delineated uncontested rights to land, and while they could easily acquire land, this was often contested by other parties and subject to much litigation concerning multiple rights in land. Land was also the subject of speculation by European firms, and fraudulent prospecting schemes in which companies would launch shareholding schemes on the basis of claims to ownership of vast concessions (Nworah 1971, Kimble 1963, Howard 1978). In this context the colonial administration sought to intervene in land markets by establishing public control over land. However, attempts to legislate a Crown Lands Bill in the Gold Coast in the 1890s was thwarted by opposition from an alliance of chiefs, lawyers (involved in concession transactions) and African business interests organised within the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ARPS), and by British business interests organised in the Manchester, Liverpool, and London Chambers of commerce (Nworah 1971, Kimble 1963, Howard 1978). The African alliance under the ARPS was concerned that colonial control over land would undermine African business interests, particularly those related to the sale of land and concessions, from which they were deriving considerable incomes and would give unfair advantage to European investors. British business interests were concerned that government control over land would raise the costs of land acquisition, and result in higher taxes. The interntion of the Colonial Office was to intervene in the land question to create a favourable environment for British firms, but it expected the private sector to pay for this privilege in taxes and royalties. Thus, the debate over land administration in West Africa was interlinked with the role of the state and the free market in economic management. At the turn of the twentieth century, the main policy was based on constructive imperialism, one in which the state was involved in building a modern infrastructure in Africa, of roads, railways, and creating free wage labour, and land markets which was to lay the foundations for capitalist development and investment in Africa, which would generate tax revenues to support the development of modernisation (Phillips 1989, Cowen and Shenton 1996).

British enterprise opposed increasing controls and taxation, which they saw as a drain on their profits, and were reluctant to expand direct investment in West Africa infrastructure. Most private firms based their business strategies on mercantile import and export trading, buying direct from African producers through a network of commissioned buyers rather than investing directly in plantation development. Early attempts by cotton companies to establish plantations had not been a success, and cotton companies turned to peasant production. Similarly, Cadbury had initially purchased cocoa from European planters in São Thomé and Principe but with scandals arising from the exposé of the use of bonded and slave labour on these islands Cadbury moved its main supply chains into peasant production on the Gold Coast (Satre 2005). Since primary commodities could often be purchase cheaper from local peasant production than from the hiring of labour, most firms involved in the trading of agricultural export commodities sought to purchase from peasant producers rather than establish plantations. As Birtwistle commented:

> There are hundreds of thousands of the best types of native who would not go out and serve under a white overseer for a daily wage, but who working in their own way, and in their own time, would accomplish far more than the average paid labourer, and would, in my opinion, be content with proceeds which give them even less than the equivalent of 6d a day (Birtwistle, 1908: 22 quoted in Phillips 1989:71).

Thus, constructive imperialism, based on capital investment in infrastructure and modern enterprises failed to materialise in West Africa. With a lack of large-scale direct capital investment in the development of enterprises within the colonies and difficulties in gaining access to cheap labour markets, colonial policy retreated to the framework of Indirect Rule. This introduced a system of rural administration implemented in collaboration with chiefs, who were empowered to make byelaw and define what constituted customary law under commodity production and integration into world markets. This served to facilitate the development of export crop production, and various forms of forced labour and migrant labour. Unable to secure free wage labour on the Gold Coast the Colonial Administration enacted the Compulsory Labour Ordinance of 1895, on which Fox Borne (1901:41) commented:

> This ordinance revived the lapsed native custom under which it was "obligatory on persons of the labouring class to give labour for public purposes, on being called out by the chief or other native superiors" and authorised the Government to compel the chiefs to supply it in this way with as many carriers as it needed. In other words, in defiance not only of the general Emancipation Act of 1834, but also of the special Gold Coast Slavery Abolition Ordinance of 1874, it re-established the status of slavery in the colony.

An influential force in this transition in imperial policy was the Third Party, which represented the interests of British mercantile trading firms within West Africa (Nworah 1971). Its three leading representatives were the trader John Holt, the travel writer Mary Kingsley, and E.D, Morel, editor of the *African Mail*, who later on in life became a labour M.P. With support from highly influential politicians within the radical liberal and labour spectrum, including

William Cadbury and the MP Josiah Wedgewood, these interests brought West African land reform onto the parliamentary agenda, successfully petitioning for a West African Lands Committee under the aegis of parliament. The Third Party opposed European ownership of land, since this opened up the potential of monopoly control over land and the establishment of direct European plantations that would undermine the sourcing of cheap commodities from African producers by mercantile trading companies (Nworah 1971, Philipps 1989).

Influenced by the ideas of Henry George the Third Party proposed a system of colonial trusteeship in which the state would take control over the management of land, which it would manage on the principles of customary land tenure. Land would be held in trust for the community and the state would take measures to prevent the emergence of private land markets and speculation in land. The objective of this were spelled out in a letter published in *The Times* of June 6 1912 on the "Problem of Land Tenure in West Africa" by Morel and his associates:

> What is required in all these tropical dependencies in West Africa, where there are no White Settlers, are Land Acts which, however they may vary in their form and wording and in their application in accordance with the character of the political relationship prevailing between their inhabitants and the paramount power, shall secure the threefold aims of legalising the rights of the natives to the occupancy and use of the soil, preventing the creation of monopolies in the soil's produce, whether natural or cultivated, and reserving the value of the land and freedom of access to it for the future generations of our protected subjects.

The model for this vision of land administration was the 1911 Land and Native Ordinance of Northern Nigeria, which placed land under the direct control of the Governor by virtue of conquest, but limited the governor to exercising this power in accordance with native law and custom, in which the land was held in trust for the communities. The ordinance enabled European enterprises to acquire land from the colonial administration as leases, but prevented the development of free land markets. In contrast with this situation, in Southern Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone land was not regulated by the colonial state, and chiefs alienated land to European concessions and to migrant farmers investing in agricultural expansion. This was portrayed by the Third Party and the West African Lands Commission as a perversion of customary norms, in which chiefs were undermining the interests of independent African cultivators for their own selfish narrow interests. The Third Party advocated vesting lands in the colonial authority to administer in lines with customary norms, to prevent speculation and monopolisation of land, the proletarianisation of African producers, and the emergence of large European plantations. However, these recommendations were never fully implemented in southern Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone, since the colonial administration lacked the capacity to implement a system of direct control over land, and depended upon the support of chiefs, who demanded rights to control and sell land under their jurisdiction. Hence, the principles of customary land administration were enacted within a framework within which chiefs maintained responsibility for the management and transaction of land, and continued to transact concessions with Europeans and land sales with migrants. Nevertheless industrial plantation production was not encouraged in West Africa, and the attempts of Lever Brothers to gain land concessions for oil palm plantations in West Africa were frustrated by hostile colonial authorities. As a consequence Lever Brothers had to move into the Congo before they could acquire suitable land for oil palm plantations (Cowen and Shenton 1996, Phillips 1989, Nworah 1972).

Although colonial rule sought to prevent the commodification of land and the emergence of a surplus landless class this did not mean that it sought equitable solutions to the land question, even in those areas in which land was vested in the colonial administration to manage on the basis of customary rights. In Northern Nigeria colonial control over land served to facilitate the imposition of export crop production upon a servile rural population. Colonial control over land was used to prevent runaway slaves moving southwards beyond the Hausa emirates into wilderness areas outside of state structures. Former slaves could only become free by purchasing their manumission. The imposition of taxes on all adult males forced former slaves to work in the cash economy to pay for both taxes and manumission (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993). The attempts to impose cotton and groundnut cultivation on Northern Nigeria, also led to untold suffering, exacerbating the consequences of a series of droughts in the early part of the twentieth century. In 1913 Northern Nigeria received the lowest rainfall in recorded memory and that the failure of rains resulted in drought in which more between 30,000 to 40,000 people died in Kano division alone (Shenton 1986). Shenton (1986) argues that the famine was the product of the colonial government's attempt to reorganise the economy, encourage the export production of groundnuts, and create tax exactions to encourage the movement of labour into both the mines and groundnut production. The introduction of taxations and the extraction of wealth resulted in a situation in which producers could only meet these demands by producing groundnuts at the expense of food. Following the famine groundnut exports continued to expand since farmers were in debt. The higher prices for export crops encouraged farmers to move into this sector, but created the conditions for further famine, which again struck in 1927.

On the Gold Coast, the emergence of cocoa farming was associated with a large concentration of land in the hands of migrant cocoa farmers. Several studies reveal marked differentiation in holdings and tonnage of cocoa marketed, with the top 10 percent of farmers controlling over 50 percent of marketed cocoa (Beckett, 1944; Beckman, 1976; Hill, 1956). In a 1957 study of Akyem Abuakwa, Hill and McGlade (1957) found that the majority of land was tended by sharecrop caretakers of migrant origin. This ranged from 53 percent to 94 percent of cocoa plantations in the various settlements surveyed. In the early 1960s Hunter (1963) recorded that 98.6 percent of land in the old cocoa pioneer district of New Suhum was cultivated by migrants. The statistics collected by Hill (1963) on cocoa settlements of migrant farmers in southeastern Ghana show considerable differentiation in the size of land holdings. In the individual settlements she surveyed there was a large concentration of holdings in the hands of a few farmers, while the larger number of farmers held small plots. These developments were made possible by the migration of labour from the north of the country and from Upper Volta, as a result of taxation policies that transformed these areas into labour reserves. Migrants were employed as annual labourers, casual labourers, and sharecrop caretakers and tenants. This existence of migrant labour enabled rich farmers to accumulate plantations. Many of the older cocoa frontier districts were opened up by migrants, who had accumulated capital in the rubber and oil palm industries and then moved into cocoa, acquiring large tracts of land in suitable forest districts away from their hometowns. Hill (1963) describes the development of the cocoa industry as a process of rural capitalism, in which entrepreneurs with capital invested in land and labour. Although many small farmers were also drawn to cocoa, the bulk of the harvest was controlled by the large capitalist indigenous farmers.

Many of the large cocoa farmers were also brokers, who purchased and controlled the cocoa of small farmers. Some of these brokers were independent and others were agents of the colonial mercantile companies. They often engaged in forward buying, advancing farmers loans to smallholder farmers to be paid of by the following season's cocoa crop, or through the practice of pawning cocoa farms against loans. During the 1920s and 1930s many of these trader-farmers formed associations and joint stock companies for the marketing of cocoa, which they attempted to ship cocoa direct to Europe and the US and negotiate better prices than were offered by the European trading companies. They attempted to circumvent the monopoly control of European firms over cocoa marketing. By the 1930s 98 percent of cocoa shipped from the Gold Coast was controlled by thirteen European companies. In 1937/38 cocoa producers on the Gold Coast organised the Cocoa Hold Up, a boycott against the selling of cocoa to European firms who were accused of monopolistic activity in driving down the price of cocoa. In contrast with the colonial rhetoric of protecting customary land rights and the communal way of life, the colonial economy was characterised by social differentiation, coercive policies that promoted labour migrations to export crop frontiers, capital accumulation, and the emergence of trade monopolies and oligopolisation of the economy.

Meillassoux (1964) has argued that the colonial economy transformed the relations of production in agriculture and replaced earlier relations of personal dependence with contracts between owners and tenants. Local farmers now had to compete with immigrant planters and many were pushed out of the village economy. However, features of the traditional economy continued to be retained in policy discourse because international capitalism continued to perpetuate these forms, which were made responsible for providing social welfare and social safety networks, in place of the state and international capital. While smallholder production continued to dominate West African agriculture, this did not produce an egalitarian rural agrarian social structure, but a skewed distributions of land, land hunger among the small plot peasantry, and a large sector of the rural poor that depended upon hired labour to supplement small incomes gained by farming on small plots There was significant rural migration, and control over large areas of land and resources by wealthier farmers in export oriented sectors. This social structure is poorly studied, and many researchers continue to perpetrate the notion of an egalitarian communal structure, without studying empirical relations of agrarian production.

The state, private estates and agribusiness in the postwar period

By the 1930s there was growing concern in British West Africa that Indirect Rule had failed to promote development and had resulted in a policy of exploitation that enabled mercantile companies to gain access to cheap export commodities but had done little to improve agricultural production. As a consequence, it was increasingly argued in colonial circles that there had been little technical progress in West African agriculture and West Africa had failed to keep up with other areas of the world. Oil palm production had originated in West Africa. It had been transplanted to southeast Asia for production on large estates, which now provided the bulk of exports while oil palm exports in West Africa languished, unable to compete with south-east Asia. From these perceptions leading colonial policy analysts advocated that the colonial state needed to facilitate the development of African agriculture. However, a prerequisite for agricultural investment was land reform, and clearly delineated individual property rights. As Bourdillon, the Governor of Nigeria, stated in relation to the development of the oil palm industry: "The main difficulty here is that in most of the palm belt the land is tribally owned, and the individual will not invest capital in a permanent crop to which he has no individual right" (Bourdillon 1937, quoted in Cowen and Shenton 1996: 295)

The first intimations of a new agrarian policy in West Africa first occurred in French West Africa. During the 1920s colonial administrators began to revise their views on governance through an alliance with chiefs, and promoted a more developmental approach. *Colonisation indigène* sought to promote a framework which would incorporate and regroup African farmers outside of export crop production into intensive cash crop production, fostering the emergence of permanent mixed farming family farms, modern technology, and individuated property rights. Resettlement projects such as the *Office du Niger* provided a social experiment in resettlement to produce modern cohesive communities (van Beusekom 2002).

In British African colonies two types of state agrarian developments initiatives occurred during the postwar period. The first was associated with land reform in the settler colony of Kenya following the MauMau uprisings. This involved the promotion of a class of middle "yeoman farmers" under the Swynnerton Plan. According to Swynnerton (1955), land hunger in the African reserves of colonial Kenya did not emanate from the expropriation of land by white settlers but from the constraints of customary tenure, which through communal land tenure failed to promote private property rights and hence discouraged investment in modern agriculture. The Swynnerton Plan sought to open up export crop production to African producers and promote land reform by consolidating land fragmentation, providing individual security of land through registration, and creating new resettlement areas. Between 1955 and 1964 the value of African peasant production was to grow threefold (Leys 1975). However, the Swynnerton Plan was not concerned with creating equitable distribution of land, but promoting accumulation in agriculture. The downside of the consolidation of holdings by prosperous farmers was the decline of the holdings of the rural poor, who became transferred into landless labourers, or as Swynnerton noted: "able, energetic or rich Africans will be able to acquire more land and bad or poor farmers less, creating a landed and a landless class. This is a normal step in the evolution of a country" (Swynnerton 1955: 10). Since then, the land question in Kenya has evolved into a process of increasing accumulation and landlessness, in which ethnic tensions are used by the political elites to mask a process of land grabbing and accumulation by the rich on all sides of the political and ethnic divide, based on increasing appropriation of public lands and expropriation (Klopp 2000. Kanyiga *et. al.* 2008).

The second type of agrarian development initiative in the postwar period was associated with large-scale mechanised resettlement schemes. These grew out of two concerns:

1. To raise food production within the colonies to obviate discontent arising from food scarcity resulting from austerity measures of the war effort and postwar reconstruction, and to lower food imports;
2. To raise exports of agricultural products to support postwar recovery of food processing and manufacturing industries, and create surplus balances of trade that could be used to fund postwar recovery (Cowen and Shenton 1991, Grischow 2006, Hodge 2007).

Implemented within the visions of Fabian imperial socialism, these stagrarian schemes were organised under the Colonial Development Corporation (CDC) and combined state interventions in promoting mechanised agriculture with a commitment to community-based development, recreating communities of resettled peasant farmers organised along collective and cooperative lines (Cohen and Shenton 1996, 1991, Grischow 2006, Hodge 2007, Phillips 1989). They sought to overcome the limitations of peasant production, while constraining the emergence of land markets, rural unemployment and a surplus rural population through dispossession. These schemes sought to expand agricultural production by opening up new frontiers in formerly marginalised areas to mechanised agriculture, rather than displacing peasant cultivators in the main export producing areas, who were already contributing considerably to colonial state surpluses through the profits realised by state marketing boards. However, these agricultural development schemes were a failure. This was partly a result of lack of knowledge in applying mechanised cultivation to African conditions, the difficulty of cultivating marginal environments, and the resistance from the peasantry from being marshalled into communal resettlement schemes based on poorly though out state directives (Cowen and Shenton 1991, 1996, Grischow 2006). Although most of these Fabian development projects collapsed, they continued to bear a legacy in the agrarian resettlement schemes, irrigation projects and contract farmer schemes that sprung up in the independence period.

During the 1960s and 1970s African nation states followed three strategies to promote agricultural modernisation: investment in large mechanised state farms; promotion of a clientele of capitalist farmers operating large mechanised estates, with subsidised inputs and loans on highly favourable terms; and *encadrement* of the peasantry. The policy of *encadrement* involved an attempt to "capture" the peasantry, by tying them into contractual relations with the state, in which they were forced to sell their crops to parastatal marketing agencies, plant crops identified by the state agricultural services, and plant them according to prescriptions, including input use and times of planting. These projects often took place in the context of the state appropriating land for "national development" initiatives, developing a project infrastructure, and then re-allocating land back to the peasantry on condition of following strict cropping regimes identified by the state. These were often associated with irrigation schemes. In a throwback to the Fabian agrarian schemes, these projects often involved the organisation of the peasantry into work teams, and the recruitment of chiefs to maintain discipline and community adherence to the project objectives and commands of parastatal production and marketing agencies (Koning 1984).

By the 1970s these resettlement projects were increasingly shaped by the World Bank's smallholder approach with its emphasis on contract farming. This was influenced by developments of agribusiness in postwar US, in which new food processing companies outsourced production to family farms. These family farms were often highly capitalised units, heavily mechanised, and dependent upon the use of purchased inputs, credits, and contracts to produce specific crops according to formalised contractual arrangements with food traders. By the 1950s contracts were being outsourced to farmers in Mexico and Central America. Increasingly the main value in agriculture was produced off-farm by input suppliers and value-added food processing (Watts, 1994, Vogeler 1981).

During the 1960s and 1970s the World Bank began to fund resettlement schemes in conjunction with the state in African countries, which sought to promote new forms of production integrating peasant production with modern agriculture technical and service industries, in which peasant production would be subsumed to the needs of agri-industries and agricultural modernisation, and produce standardised varieties. This was carried out under the tenets of a theory of the relative efficiency of smallholder production over large farms, but the relative efficiency of large production units in certain fields, such as provision of inputs and provision of mechanisation services (Lipton 1993). The outgrower nucleus estate became a model for organising oil palm, rubber, and cocoa sectors in which contract farmers were organised around a large estate and processing facilities, complementing the output of the estate, without expanding the labour force and risk in investment (Watts, 1994). Contracting also became prevalent on irrigation schemes producing vegetables. By the early 1980s contract farming was common in African horticultural exports to the European markets.

In some instances, the development of outgrower schemes involved the opening up of new land, as in the creation of oil palm plantations on gazetted forest land in the Côte d'Ivoire (Daddieh 1994). In other instances, it involved the expropriation of the land of peasant households, of which only a small proportion was relocated to peasant household, as in the Ghana Oil Palm Development Corporation project in the Kwae area of Akyem (Gyasi 1992). The advantage of smallholder contract farming arose in the context of new quality control requirements of agribusiness to produce standardised brands and grades. This was often labour intensive, and these tasks could often be produced more effectively by family farms controlling small production units rather than large mechanised estates (Watts 1994). These tasks were not easily subjected to mechanised production. Crops such as green beans required painstaking manual labour to pick beans at their best stage of ripening, which could not easily be mechanised given that crops did not mature at the same time (Watts, 1994). Contracting enabled the farmer to be disciplined to produce crops in a particular period using predetermined cultivation techniques and inputs. It enabled the risk of production to be pushed onto the farmer, while it guaranteed the marketing company access to the yield of farmers.

The rise of transnational agrifood systems

During the early 1980s agribusiness became increasingly internationalised with the development of new communications technology, the expansion of cheap freight, the rise of new biotechnology and food processing technologies, and the relaxation of national tariffs and multilateral commodity agreements under neoliberal political regimes. This enabled the leading food traders to source production throughout the world. The economic crisis of the 1970s and early 1980s also resulted in a reconfiguration of the food system, with increasing concentration of production in the hands of a few food traders and branders through takeovers and mergers, the expansion of food traders into financial management and futures markets, and the rise of a handful of transnational supermarket chains controlling fresh food marketing chains.

The major agribusiness companies have been able to move into various specialised food processing and input manufacturing sectors through acquisitions. For example, Cargill, originally a Mid-West trader in grains, has diversified into livestock feed, livestock, seeds, and fertiliser through the acquisition of a two-thirds share in the Mosaic Company, one of the largest synthetic fertilizer producers in the world. Recently Cargill has become one of the three major cocoa grinding processors in the world, through the acquisition of private sector and state grinding facilities, including within the main cocoa producing countries of Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana (Losch 2002). By the early 1990s Cargill had operations and subsidiaries in over 60 countries. With increasing tight commodity margins and increasing mergers and acquisitions in the agricultural commodities business Cargill has expanded into an increasing range of commodities, and built upon its experiences in processing, managing risk, and supply chain logistics, developing investments in energy, ethanol products, and futures and finances, including hedge funds such as the Black River Assets Management Fund (Broehl 1998). Increasingly, agricultural processing is controlled by a handful of corporations. In the USA, about 100 companies control over 80 percent of value added food processing. Similar trends are noticeable in Europe, with food manufacturing being dominated by large concerns such as Nestlé and Unilever, who have achieved concentration by acquiring well established brands (Cap Gemini Ernst and Young 2007). The Cap Gemini Ernst and Young report on *State of the Art in Food* predicts that in the near future global food manufacturing will be dominated by 25 brand manufacturing companies.

During the 1990s and the 2000s large supermarket chains emerged as dominant players in food markets, carrying a wide diversity of products sourced throughout the world, using specialised delivery services, information technology to target customers and develop supplies and quality control, and just-in-time marketing to maximise floor space and the diversity of products carried (Gibbon and Ponte, 2005; Young, 2004; Dolan and Humphrey, 2000). In the UK sales of fresh fruit and vegetable rose from 33 percent of the total in 1998 to 80 percent after 2000 (Gibbon, 2003; Dolan and Humphrey, 2000). By the late 1990s, two thirds of food sales in the UK were carried out by four supermarket chains. Several supermarket chains operate in global markets, including Carrefour, which has established a large presence in European and Asian markets, and Wal-Mart, with a large presence in Europe, North and South America and Asia. The Cap Gemini Ernst and Young report (2007) predicts that in the near future the global food industry will be dominated by five supermarket chains.

In contrast with brand manufacturers, large supermarket retailers avoid direct involvement in production, and specialise in controlling marketing and supply chains. Supermarket supply chains are oligopolistic by nature, using product differentiation, advertising and information technology to battle for consumers and raise the entry barrier to production by scale of marketing. Production is outsourced and firms concentrate on branding, packaging, design and marketing functions. To meet these conditions they need to impose quality and logistic controls over producers to ensure that products meet the requirements of niche consumers and are competitive. The immense buying power of the top supermarket chains has resulted in the demise of wholesale markets in western countries in which farmers and intermediary traders could market in small quantities and negotiate prices. The liberalisation of markets has resulted in the decline of price regulatory commodity boards, multilateral commodity agreements, and export quotas that once guaranteed farmers markets and stable prices. Supermarkets prefer to engage in contracts with large producers and suppliers who can guarantee large quantities of uniform quality products.

These oligopolistic trends in food markets has resulted in an upward movement in the scale of production towards larger high-tech firms. Supermarket chains are increasingly able to impose conditions of production on farmers and suppliers, and force producers and suppliers to absorb the cost of price-cutting promotions and wars, or new technologies imposed on production (Young 2004; Vorley 2003). Supermarket chains are able to access supplies from a variety of locations, finding new sources of cheaper production, which results in less competitive producers in one moment in time becoming increasingly sidelined and unable to find markets.

Within African countries, the crisis of the 1980s resulted in a restructuring of agriculture in which import-substituting industries declined and were displaced by new non-traditional export-oriented agro-industries integrated into transnational food chains, and in which state marketing boards were often privatised and taken over by foreign investors Agribusiness and supermarket chains have been able to source products from a wide range of localities throughout the world. This has enabled them to pick and choose, relocating production from more expensive to cheaper areas of production and from less efficient to more efficient areas. This has enabled transnational agribusiness companies to make demands on governments and donors to implement policies that suit them, to create suitable investments in infrastructures, quality controls, standard, phytosanitary conditions, property rights, land market, seed laws, labour regulations, tax concessions, etc. Although markets have become liberalised, a number of food scares have resulted in more stringent phytosanitary regulations being placed on entry to EU and US markets. Labour regulations (related to child labour rather than union rights) have also been introduced. This has raised the barriers to entry for a number of crops, which results in uneven development of agribusiness investment within Africa. While agribusiness, contracting, and horticultural exports are well developed in Kenya, with its relative favourable public sector investment in agriculture, in many other African nations new export sectors they are poorly developed, or very limited.

The international financial institutions claim that the objective of agricultural restructuring is to create pro-poor markets and replace an emphasis on national growth with poverty alleviation. However, in reality the liberalisation of markets has frequently undermined the stability of traditional export crops. On-going research on the impact of agribusiness on smallholder agriculture suggests that far from promoting a "win-win" solution, market liberalisation has tended to erode the bargaining power of smallholder agriculture, strengthen demand-driven marketing chains and buyer control of commodity markets, erode the proportion of value of commodities accruing to farmers, promoted increasing social differentiation, eroded the ability of smallholders to compete effectively, and has led to the re-emergence of large estate production as the dominant production unit in may commodity chains.

The coffee chain

The research of Daviron and Ponte (2005) on global value chains in the coffee sector is important in creating a framework that challenges the claims of pro-poor market growth. Prior to liberal market reforms, coffee production had been a relatively stable sector in which farmers were well represented in commodity agreements. Liberalisation has created a more informal system that is characterised by instability and price volatility. The decline of state institutions in coffee has eroded the capacity of farmers to represent themselves, engage in independent actions, and articulate their demands. It has created an institutional structure that is buyer dominated. An increasing proportion of the revenues generated in coffee production have been transferred from farmers to operators in the consuming countries. While commodity boards were able to create price stability, the emergence of roasting firms as the major force in coffee marketing has destabilised prices and resulted in price volatility. Corporate financial investment in roasting firms dictate that short-term maximisation of profits have become the overriding goal of buyers.[2] However, the instability of the system is not a problem for the equity holders since their diversified investment portfolios act as a hedge fund.

New technologies and information technology enables roasters to combine coffees from different regions to create new blends. This enables them to devise flexible strategies of product substitution combined with purchasing minimum supply quantities from any region, maintaining relative surpluses in production, all of which acts to depress prices. Deregulation and the collapse of the old coffee agreements have served to undermine the stability of production and have increased the bargaining power of roasters and suppliers, resulting in a process of "squeezing the farmer " (in terms of proportion of the final price paid at the farm gate) that started in the 1990s and has progressed further in the 2000s (Daviron and Ponte 2005, Kaplinsky 2004). In 2001 the global price reached $0.50/lb, a 30 year low and falling below the cost of production (Fitter and Kaplinnsky 2001) As a result, farmgate prices now represent less than 7 percent of the retail price (Kaplinsky 2004, Daviron and Ponte 2005). In contrast, farmers gain up to about 21 percent for upmarket Fair Trade coffee brands (Daviron and Ponte 2005). However, this is about the proportion farmers were gaining in the 1970s and 1980s under the International Coffee Agreements (ICA). While the ICA agreements covered the majority of coffee production in the world, Fair Trade only comprises one percent of the market (Daviron and Ponte, 2005). Under the new free market regimes the quality of coffee brands has declined, resulting in a demand for speciality coffees. The certification of these speciality coffees requires capital and technical assistance and other barriers to entry that favour large-scale estate production. Estates are better able to forge direct links with speciality importers and roasters, and better able to internalise information feedback and respond to changing consumer preferences. Daviron and Ponte (2005) argue that the organisation of the production of specialised coffees by smallholders is expensive and only viable when carried out with donor support. While producers get better prices for speciality coffees, the roasters are often able to capture an even larger share of the profits than for mainstream coffees. As a result of the crisis in coffee prices during the 1990s many smallholder farmers were forced to sell at prices below the cost of production, enduring considerable impoverishment and immiseration. However,

[2] This element of speculation is reflected in the much higher number of bags of coffee transacted on commodity exchanges than total exports in a year. For instance, In 1992 on the New York Coffee, Sugar and Cocoa exchange a total of over 621 million 60 kg bags of coffee were traded while over the same period total world exports of coffee amounted to 55 million bags (Montavon 1994:16-17, cited in Fitter and Kaplinsky 2001)

within the major consumer countries coffee trading is booming, with the development of new coffee chains and speciality coffees, including organic and fair trade coffees and other forms of symbolic branding that promote coffee as a refined and stylish cultural product associated with sustainable livelihoods, which belie the actual conditions of production of coffee and control of the transnational trade and erosion of livelihoods. Thus it is important to examine the impact of agrarian transformations on the actual livelihoods of farmers with different endowments, rather than assume that the incorporation of independent peasant producers into global markets constitutes a viable solution rooted in pro-poor market development. The following case studies examine the impacts of the integration of producers into agribusiness markets on different categories of producers, and the recomposition of smallholders, large-scale producers and capital investments.

Ivoirian cocoa

Similar conditions exist in cocoa production as in coffee, albeit with more pronounced monopoly control over the industry and more complex and specialised processing of cocoa beans. Liberalisation of trade during the 1980s led to pronounced competition in the cocoa industry and by the 1990s the number of grinding firms based in Europe dropped from 40 to 9, of which the four leading firms are Cargill, Archer Daniel Midland (ADM), Barré Callebaut and Nestlé (Losch, 2002, Fold 2002, Lavin 2007). The top three grinding firms are agricultural traders that have entered into the cocoa sector through takeovers. Only Nestlé is a chocolate manufacture in its own right.

Before the 1990s cocoa grinding and product marketing were carried out by the same firm, which sourced particular beans from around the world and blended them into distinct brands. New processing techniques enabled grinders to achieve a wide range of new products from the similar beans, which enabled economies of scale. Most manufacturers have now become dependent upon specialised grinders to provide them with processed products. Cocoa production has become highly concentrated. In the early 1980s five countries, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brazil, produced over 90 percent of output. Côte d'Ivoire the largest producer, supplied over 40 percent of world production by the early 1980s.

During the 1980s the Ivoirian state invested heavily in building state-owned grinding facilities. During the 1980s and 1990s as mergers and takeovers became pronounced in the cocoa industry, the Ivoirian industry became subject to aggressive takeover bids by major transnational companies in the "cocoa wars", aided by the conditionalities imposed by donors under structural adjustment " (Losch 2002). While takeover bids were fiercely resisted by the Ivoirian state, by the early 1990s a severe economic crisis brought on by the collapse of international cocoa price in the early 1990s, forced a bankrupt Ivoirian state to privatise cocoa marketing and grinding. This led to the effective emergence of ADM, Cargill and Barré Callebaut as the major cocoa grinders in the world, each with grinding facilities in Côte d'Ivoire. Cocoa grinding became transformed from an activity largely concentrated in European and North American cities, to a transnational enterprise grinding at source in producing countries. By the 1990s the transnational cocoa traders controlled huge stocks of cocoa, and overproduction resulted in rapidly falling prices. As a consequence production in Brazil and Malaysia rapidly declined in the late 1990s, resulting in Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana, and Indonesia controlling over 75 percent of world production.

The collapse of cocoa prices was to have an adverse effect on Côte d'Ivoire. From the 1980s considerable socio-economic research has been carried out on the cocoa industry and land relations in the cocoa sector in Côte d'Ivoire, which enables the relationship of economic liberalisation and the impact of agribusiness on land relations and smallholder agriculture to be observed.

From the early 1970s the Ivoirian state encouraged cultivation of cocoa by peasant farmers, and facilitated the acquisition of land by migrant Ivoirian farmers from the Baule area, and by a large influx of foreign migrants from Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Since the state controlled cocoa marketing and was highly dependent upon cocoa revenues, expansion of cocoa production provided the state with more revenues with which to fund its development initiatives and build political alliances and legitimacy (Chauveau 2000, 2006). The state encouraged the entry of migrants into cocoa farming and recognised the rights of tillers to land, whatever their origins. However, the state did not interfere in the allocation of land to migrants, but encouraged chiefs and elders in the low populated and relatively undeveloped frontier areas in the West to release land to migrants. Chiefs and elders adapted customary institutions for the allocation of land to migrants to cocoa farming, based on notions of tributary relations (*tutorat*). The *tutorat* involved payments of sums of money, which reflected the relative value of the land, and were often understood by the migrant land purchasers as land sales. The elements of land sales in these transactions were masked by the landowners, who represented them as a reciprocal relationship between migrants and landowners rooted in a moral economy of clientship (Chauveau 2006, Chauveau and Colin 2010). In the new cocoa frontier areas in western Côte d'Ivoire levels of capital accumulation among the indigenes were low, and below the threshold at which many of them could invest significantly in the development of cocoa plantations with hired labour. The state encouraged chiefs and elders to release land to migrants for cocoa development, and in exchange provided development initiatives within these areas, access to education, and opportunities for the relocation of youth from the rural areas into the urban areas as part of the urban labour force. Development policy in the Ivoirian state followed some notion of modernisation based on urbanisation, in which export crop production formed the basis for urban development, and rural people improved their living standards by relocating to urban centres. Thus, the rural areas became the domain of migrant labour and toiling farmers from the Sahel, providing surpluses to enable Ivoirian nationals to reproduce themselves as cosmopolitan urbanites. The rich cocoa farmers were largely composed of migrants from the Baule region, who were heavily represented in the ruling political party (Léonard and Oswald 1997). They converted their profits from cocoa into real estate, and education of their children, and other investments in the trading and urban sector. They depended upon a base of migrant Sahelian labourers for accumulation in cocoa.

The economic recession of the 1980s and the collapse of cocoa prices adversely affected the Ivoirian economy, undermining the political status quo and contract between the state, chiefly landlords, migrant farmers and southern rural youth. The crisis resulted in the introduction of austerity measures that pressurised the state to privatise cocoa marketing and introduce drastic cutbacks in social expenditure. In an economy overwhelmingly dependent upon cocoa, the collapse of cocoa price resulted in a severe recession and widespread urban unemployment. The recession was also linked to the global restructuring of the cocoa industry, in which the takeover of the Ivoirian cocoa processing industry and marketing was a major step in the reconfiguration of transnational control over cocoa processing.

The recession coincided with the decline of the cocoa frontier and the senescence of the early plantings of cocoa. New plantings of cocoa now had to take place through replanting in old frontier areas and the cost of this was significantly higher than in new frontier forest areas. Ruf (2001) estimates that it costs twice as much to establish a plantation on fallow land as it does in new forest areas. The large Baule cocoa planters began to retreat from cocoa as their standards of living declined, as was also happening in Brazil and Malaysia. They found it increasingly difficult to maintain their social status and networks of social expenditure on which their ability to socially reproduce themselves and mobilise labour depended. The cocoa sector became dominated by small intensive plantations cultivated by migrant Burkinabe farmers who worked small plots of land, used more inputs, utilised more labour in weeding, were accustomed to lower standards of living and less investment in the education of their children, and could draw upon mobile networks of Burkinabe labourers (Léonard and Oswald 1997; Léonard 1997). While this represents a move towards smaller and more efficient plantations, the decline in living standards was unacceptable to a large number of Ivoirian farmers who became alienated from the cocoa industry. Internationally this movement was also associated with an outcry against "child slave labour" in the Côte d'Ivoire, and the enactment of the Elgin-Harkin Protocol in the US which called for the chocolate industry to guarantee that its products were "child labour" and "slave labour" free. (Off 2006)

With bleak prospects in the urban areas, many of the youth from the southwest began to return to their hometowns, where they found limited opportunities to gain land, which had been transacted with migrants. They also found limited opportunities to enter cocoa farming given the low returns and intensiveness of production, or opportunities to labour given the competition from lowly paid Burkinabe migrants. They thus turned their frustrations upon the migrants, taking up the xenophobic slogans of *Ivoirité* been promoted by politicians to blame the economic crisis on foreigners, and forcefully ejected migrants from their land (Chauveau and Richards 2008, Kouame 2010). This was compounded by the implementation of the 1998 Rural Land Law, which sought to harmonise customary and statutory law and give formal recognitions to customary law. This differentiated between "customary rights conforming to tradition", which were vested in indigenes, and "customary rights ceded to third parties" which defined the position of migrants (Chauveau 2009). These ambiguous discourses on land rights were embraced by indigenes in southern Côte d'Ivoire as proof of the illegitimate rights acquired by migrants in land in violation of tradition, and as justification for expelling migrants. These events were to ultimately unravel into the ethnic divisiveness that was to result in civil war. Ultimately, the erosion of living standards and alienation of large numbers of farmers from the cocoa industry was to leave the Burkinabe farmers in a highly vulnerable position, and result in a national political crisis, regional and ethnic tensions, and civil war. As Côte d'Ivoire descended into civil war, the major cocoa grinders opened up new grinding plants in neighbouring Ghana and elsewhere, and are now attempting to open up new areas of cocoa production in new countries to diversify sources of supply.

The land question in Côte d'Ivoire needs to be contextualised within the development of cocoa. The developments within the industry resulted in a transition to small migrant owned plantations in the 1990s. While this could be interpreted as representing equity and efficiency, this was also the product of an increasing appropriation of profits by transnational cocoa traders at a time when the cost of production was increasing. This discouraged many cocoa farmers from reinvesting in new plantings. Those who continued to invest in creating new plantations were migrants who were best able to absorb these shocks while adopting the necessary innovations to engage in production. This resulted in a loss of livelihood and living standards for a large proportion of the population in the cocoa belt, which then became reflected in growing resentments and interminable social conflicts. Thus market pressures on production led to a squeeze on farmers and the exit of many farmers from production.

The rise and fall of smallholder pineapple cultivation in Ghana

During the 1980s pineapple exports developed in Ghana and were pioneered largely by Ghanaian business investors involved in import-export trade looking for new sources of foreign exchange. They took advantage of the proximity of the European markets and cheap freight prices to airfreight pineapples to Europe. The dominant variety produced in Ghana, Smooth Cayenne was favourably received in European markets and preferred to products from Central America (Whitfield 2010). Pineapple production developed in close proximity to Accra, in the Nsawam area, where there had been a pineapple cannery in the 1960s and 1970s. By the end of the 1990s pineapple was largely a smallholder crop with between 50 to 70 companies exporting pineapples of which only two companies exported over 2,000 tons. About 40 percent of pineapples were exported from smallholder farms, many of which were organised into cooperatives and received technical assistance from USAID (Whitfield 2010). Similar developments also occurred in Côte d'Ivoire, where an emphasis on sea freighting allowed Ivoirian pineapples to capture a greater share of the European market .

By the early 2000s Ghana exports of pineapple accounted for 11 percent of the European market, but this fell to 3 percent in 2005, as Ghanaian pineapple had to compete with the resurgence of Costa Rican production. This was the result of the introduction of a new variety by Del Monte, MD2, which stored well, had good taste attributed, was resistant to parasites and rot. Del Monte established the Pineapple Development Corporation in 1978 in Costa Rica and set up large industrial plantations. However, throughout the 1980s and 1990s Del Monte struggled to produce high quality pineapples until it began experimenting with the MD2 variety. Apart from having excellent taste attributes, MD2 is highly sensitive to cultural preparations and requires large investments in land preparation, fertiliser and water management, and post harvest management and storage. Without careful technical management MD2 produces small inferior fruits and low yields. With its investment in large mechanised estates, Del Monte was ideally placed to develop large-scale production of MD2 on estates of several thousand hectares. The ability of Del Monte to produce large volumes of high quality pineapples at low costs gave it privileged access to European markets leading to a rapid switch in demand from West African pineapples (Whitfield 2010, Fold and Gough 2007). Del Monte also launched an effective lobbying campaign for the dominant supermarket chains to stock MD2, and introduced innovations in downstream packaging and logistics to integrate production into supermarket chains (Fold 2008).

Del Monte attempted to introduce barriers of entry for the competition, by claiming controversial proprietary rights over MD2, which were eventually legally rejected, but enabled it to gain patenting rights until 2003 and establish a dominant role in the production of MD2 over other competing agribusiness companies. As a consequence, it became difficult for West African cultivators to get access to MD2 and to work out suitable agronomic practices. The large scale of capital investment required for successful cultivation of MD2 also precluded the participation of the majority of Ghanaian producers, heralding the collapse of the smallholder pineapple industry. Since then attempts to rehabilitate the Ghanaian pineapple industry have been based on the introduction of MD2 on large estates controlled by subsidiaries of transnational sourcing companies, such as Dole, a major competitor of Del Monte in Central America now moving into West Africa (Fold and Gough 2007, Fold 2008). While these new developments in Ghana involve contractual relations with large estates, and between large estates and smallholders, the entry barriers for smallholders to be included in rigorously controlled outgrower schemes are high, involving access to considerable outlays of capital and technological innovations (Fold 2008).

The willingness of the Costa Rican state to make available large areas of land for transnational development of large-scale pineapple production, ultimately led to the demise of West African smallholder production. Whitfield argues that the decline of Ghanaian pineapple production reflects the lack of proactive policies of the Ghanaian government to create a competitive and favourable environment to both encourage improvement of production and the investment of transnational corporations in the development of large pineapple estates. However, such a development would require the state supporting the expropriation of large areas of land for transnational pineapple production. Although transnational companies may claim to promote pro-poor growth, the rivalry between competing companies for market control establishes economic practices that negatively impact on smallholder production.

Oil palm outgrowers and independent oil palm smallholders in the Eastern Region of Ghana

Even where commercial smallholders operate independently of agribusiness the successful expansion of their investments can negatively impact on the availability of land for other categories of farmers. Within the Kwae area of the Eastern Region Ghana development of commercial oil palm production has been complicated, involving both the expropriation of large areas of land for the development of nucleus estates, ourgrowers and then independent oil palm cultivators.

During the 1970s the government of Ghana in collaboration with the World Bank began to invest in oil palm development in an attempt to curb large foreign exchange expenditures on vegetable oils. This was organised on the nucleus-estate outgrower model, widely introduced in the Côte d'Ivoire (Daddieh 1994, Gyasi 1992). The GOPDC plantation was developed on an 8,935 ha concession which had involved expropriating around 7,000 farming households in 1975. The expropriation was resisted and contested by many farmers with the result that many farmers continue to "squat" on parts of the plantation. Only 5,205 ha of the land has been developed into the nucleus estate. In addition to this 349 ha of land have been allocated to smallholders who produce for the company under contract. The company allocates the smallholders lands, seedlings, inputs, and loans for weeding, on condition that the smallholders deliver their yield to the company at prices decided by the company (Daddieh 1994, Gyasi 1992). A similar relationship exists with outgrowers, with the difference that the outgrowers use their own land . There are about 7,000 outgrowers farming 13,000 ha in a 30 ha radius of the Kwae plantation.

The expropriation of land for the creation of the plantation has created significant land shortage within the area. As a result of this there is a thriving land market dominated by sharecrop transactions rather than land sales. The GOPDC outgrower scheme caters for this, enabling sharecrop tenants and landlords to participate in the outgrower contract. This stipulates the division of proceeds to be two-thirds to the tenant and one-third to the landlord. However, the dominant sharecrop arrangement in the wider Kwae economy is a fifty percent share between both parties. Some outgrowers and prospective outgrowers have been disgruntled about the price offered for their oil palm, which they estimate is sometimes lower than that on local markets. However, modern hybrid oil palm cultivation is recognised to be highly profitable. As a result, many prosperous farmers have attempted to independently invest in oil palms. Many of the landlords prefer to give out their land to autonomous farmers, rather than to engage in the GOPDC outgrower contract, since they can gain a half of the oil palm plantation rather than one-third of the proceeds of the sale. The shortage of land in the Kwae area has resulted in a large casual labour force, which enables farmers with capital to hire labour for plantation development. As a result of the large demand for land for plantation development, family elders prefer to give out family land on a sharecrop arrangement to plantation developers than to family members for food farming. The tenant farmers develop the land they acquire on a sharecrop arrangement into oil palm plantation, using their own capital to acquire seeds and hire labour. The tenant retains the land as long as the plantation continues to be productive, which is in the region of 20 to 30 years. A change of crop or replanting requires the renegotiation of the contract (Amanor with Diderutuah 2001).

This arrangement enables family heads without capital to gain access to plantations. However this deprives other family members of access to land. This has been achieved by raising the customary prestations (*aseda*) that family members make to gain recognition of land allocated them, to significantly higher levels than poorer farmers can afford. While this used to defined in terms of spirits and sheep it has now acquired a monetary form. This monetary value has been inflated in recent years to reflect the value of the land, to a level that will ensure that the user needs to make a significant profit from the land to recoup their expenditure. As a consequence of this, large areas of household land are now been transacted on sharecrop arrangement with individuals outside the family, or allocated to family members as a sharecrop arrangement. In one study carried out at Mamanso in the Kwae area, about 50 percent of plots were under sharecrop arrangements (Amanor with Diderutuah 2001). The use of family land by family members for plantation development has become a source of many disputes within families, since the long duration of plantations withdraws the land from general access while enabling the planter to gain high incomes. While these developments have led to the emergence of a small stratum of wealthy commercial smallholders accumulating oil palm plantation they have also produced a large number of dispossessed youth without secure livelihoods, who mainly gain income as casual labourers. Women have also suffer from diminishing access to land for food crop production. In the late 1990s many of these youths were raiding the Kwae plantations for oil palm fruits to gain an income, in collaboration with women who processed the fruits into oil for sale on the local market. They considered this as morally justified since the GOPDC plantation had dispossessed them of land (Amanor 2005).

Similar developments characterise other commercial export tree crop sectors, such as cashew and mango, where the creation of long duration perennial plantations disrupts the recycling of extended family and communal land between fallowing and short term cropping that characterises the dominant farming systems. Chiefs and custodians of land are also enticed into transacting land with plantation developers, resulting in increasing scarcity of land for the community. This frequently leads to conflicts between the chiefs, elders and youth and interfamily conflicts over allocation of land for food cropping and plantation crop development (Amanor 2008; 2010, Gyasi 1994). None of this is recognised in policy frameworks for land reform, which tend to focus on some conception of abstract and mythical undifferentiated smallholders that do not operate bush fallowing systems on communal or extended family lands. According to recent policy reform frameworks these undifferentiated smallholders require security of tenure to enable them to invest in farm development. However, if investment is in reality only open to a sector of rich and middle farmers, security of tenure and security of land transactions only opens up the dispossession of poorer farmers and their transformation into a labouring class. It secures the purchase of their land for better-endowed farmers.

Land reform and economic liberalisation

Commercial pressures on farming are reflected in recent trends in land administrative reforms, which seek to promote equity and efficiency. Contemporary land reform is characterised by two broad concerns: to secure individual rights in land and rights that can be transacted on land markets; and to harmonise customary and statutory rights in land so that customary rights can gain full legal recognition. These two approaches tend to complement each other, since the process of creating land markets is facilitated by a process of recognising apriori rights to own and transact land. The recognition of customary rights in land tends to reinvent customary land as a fungible bundle of property rights that can easily be converted, transferred and transacted as private property. Thus the recognition of the customary rights of landowners can result in a process of dispossession of the rural poor. Lavigne Delville argues that claims based on ancestral rights to land can result in the expropriation of land users: 'In some cases, the intervention of the Rural Land Plan in Ivory Coast has enabled local people to claim ownership of land that has been made available to groups of incomers several generations ago" (Lavigne

Delville 2000:118). Similarly in the Fouta Djallon area of Guinea, Boiro (1996) describes that following a programme of decentralisation of land administration to communities, the former Fulbe overlords of the Rimaube cultivators started claiming back lands which had been allocated to their former dependent after independence, following reforms based on redistributing land to the tiller. In periurban Ashanti, Ubink (2008) records that chiefs are using their newly revamped powers over land to appropriate land from small farmers in peri-urban areas and sell them to property developers.

The original intentions of land market liberalisation reforms was to create favourable conditions for foreign investors, enhanced information systems would facilitate transparent and speedy transactions that would win the confidence of investors. Transparent land transactions required discipline within the customary sector. This could be established by customary mapping of land, which would identify both clear owners of land, and areas marked by conflicting ownership disputes. Investors could then avoid the hotspots in which property rights to transact land could not be clearly demarcated. The opening up of markets following structural adjustment resulted in the rapid expansion of investment in mining, timber, wildlife and tourist sectors in Africa, resulting in the allocation of concessions and land transactions that appropriated large sectors of land. Reforms in land aimed at creating greater transparency in land markets and discipline in the conversion of customary rights into individualised statutory property rights. The process of recognising community rights in land, also aimed to create security for foreign investment and for the appropriation of land, by creating institutional processes through which investors could convert customary land into private property. Thus, many of the states in the forefront of contemporary land administrative reform based on recognising, formalising and harmonising customary or community rights in land are also in the vanguard of releasing substantial areas to foreign investors for large-scale agricultural development, including Madagascar, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Ghana.

Equity and efficiency have become the slogans for neoliberal pro-poor reform. Initially efficiency was attributed to smallholder production and held up against political distortions of the state which promoted inefficient large scale production. However, increasingly the smallholder sector is characterised by bifurcation into two sectors. The first consists of highly competitive commercial smallholders networked into agribusiness and supermarket chains and contracts with large estates, and possessing technical skills that enable them to upgrade their skills and respond to new entry barriers based on grades, standards, quality controls and volume sales. The second consists of smallholders who struggle to meet barriers to production in export crop production and languish in producing basic staples. Under these conditions of increasing social differentiation equity and efficiency no longer converge along the inverse function, and the way is paved for the less successful farmers to give way to more commercial production. The freedom of the market dictates that land must be distributed to the more efficient. . This is explicitly articulated in the 2008 *World Development Report* of the World Bank on agriculture: "Secure and unambiguous property rights also allow markets to transfer land to more productive uses and users" (p.138). Further on, the report states: "Preparing people to migrate out of agriculture is the flipside of the economy's structural transformation as agriculture grows" (World Bank 2008: 248). Thus, the

Agribusiness transformation of agricultural production and the pressures created on smallholders is resulting in a significant appropriation of land by large-scale highly technical production, which is displacing smallholders, and converting them into labourers, or as the World bank phrases it:

> Smallholders sometimes can also benefit from economies of scale in input or output markets by renting out their land and working on the larger farms. Increasing the bargaining power of smallholders in this type of arrangement can help guarantee that benefits are shared by smallholders and the larger farms (World Bank 2008: 92).

Thus, the dominant policy vision of the future of agriculture is not of an egalitarian structure of autonomous smallholders with secure rights in small family farms. It is rather of an increasingly competitive but leaner commercial smallholder sector, which is expanding to displace less competitive smallholders and convert their land to more profitable land uses; and the integration of these commercial smallholders into agrifood chains, combining networks of large estates, smallholders, suppliers, transporters, financial investments and hedge funds, and transnational food traders into highly capitalistic production. This then ushers in a gradual process of dispossession from below, in which the pressures of market competitiveness leads to the exit of independent farm production of the rural poor and the increasing concentration of farm property, but can with latent dangers of social tensions and conflicts as seen in the Côte d'Ivoire.

Reforms that enable smallholders to gain access to more land, through the market and through a process of dispossession of less efficient farmers, enable large-scale enterprises to also gain access to land. Increasing commercial pressures within a global economy leads to a decline of smallholders, and opens up further opportunities for large-scale enterprises, agribusiness and networks of large estates contracting highly productive smallholders to gain access to land and other valuable resources associated with the control of production. Agribusiness firms can meet markets demands in many sectors of the agricultural economy from relatively small proportions of potential productive areas within the world. This enables agribusiness to place demands on governments to provide concessions, infrastructural support, and regulations that favour agribusiness. Agribusiness has considerable leverages through international financial institutions to create pressures on governments to create favourable reforms for their operations. However, agribusiness also has the freedom to relocate their supply chains to areas in which cheaper production can be gained, creating considerable instability and vulnerability among producers, who are pressurised to produce lower than costs of production, and whose livelihoods are easily ruined. This leaves many old declining agricultural districts in both developed and developing countries, assigned to the margins of production by their inability to compete with the latest regions of accumulation.

Conclusion

The recent concern with land grabbing by new players in agricultural markets detracts from recent developments in agribusiness, which are resulting in a complex and gradual process of ruin of family farms and dispossession from below, as farmers struggle to compete in markets and global value chains. And become displaced by entry barriers and the expansion of large capitalised estates. The introduction of new players and new markets threatens to disrupt and open up alternatives to the conditionalities placed by international financial institutions on African agriculture. They threaten the powerful convergence between food chain governance by transnational food corporations and good governance imposed by donors, in which the main role of government is to create favourable conditions for agribusiness and for commercial smallholder integration into agribusiness chains. However calls for new investors to study and emulate contract farmer arrangements introduced by agribusiness are misplaced, and do not reflect contemporary developments in agribusiness based on the dispossession of "inefficient" smallholders through barriers of entry, and dispossession through market competition and free land markets. In many respects the new investments in large-scale agriculture reflect these new developments in agribusiness.

History is important in revealing the extent to which paradigms of societal development reflect the particularities of a given period, or the general trends and transformations over a long period. In this context theories about the efficiency and equity of agricultural development have a long history and have shaped different trajectories of agrarian development in different periods. Agriculture in West Africa has a long history of integration into world markets, monopoly control, social differentiation, commercial pressures and price squeezes on farmers. The background to present developments is not a stable communitarian structure rooted in customary relations, but a history of social differentiation and uneven integration into markets.

In the early colonial period discourses about equity and efficiency were articulated to support the centrality of smallholder production in West Africa, and the integration of smallholder production into mercantile markets. The justification for autonomous African smallholder production of export crops lay in their capacity to produce high volumes of cheap crops. This system was maintained by coercive relations and various forms of forced labour that ensured the migration of labour into the main export producing zones. By the 1930s the lack of investment that this engendered in the development of agriculture and the extreme oligopolisation of mercantile trading companies involved in the export business was to result in accusations of exploitative policies. This resulted in new colonial state policies that sought to promote state investment in agricultural development and the creation of state marketing boards, and by the late 1940s of large-scale agricultural schemes integrating peasant production units, and land reform programmes that granted secure tenure rights to a prospering middling and rich farmers. In the independence period this framework was carried into large state farms, cooperatives, and contract farming arrangements with state marketing companies.

During the recession of the late 1970s these arrangements were challenged in international policy frameworks, which began to depict large-scale agriculture as a political distortion dependent upon political support, urban bias and state networks of patronage. Smallholder agriculture was again portrayed as efficient and equitable, and the inverse function postulated. This framework was used to pressurise the state into privatising its direct investments in agriculture. However, the theory of the inverse relation was modified to accommodate contract farming and the emergence of agribusiness, in which efficiency came to embody a configuration of different scales of farming in different sectors, including small-scale family farming, and distribution of input and mechanised technology and financial services by large-scale farming units. During the 1980s agribusiness became increasingly concentrated through takeovers and mergers as removal of national tariffs and multilateral commodity arrangements enabled agribusiness to develop global sourcing value chains. This had led to an increasingly competitive global agricultural sector, which is dominated by transnational firms, but also marked by increasing insecurity of production and highly volatile pricing structures, subject to financial speculation, large future markets, complex marketing logistics, large buffer stocks, and new barriers to entry based on grades, quality control measures, labour and health standards, and various certification schemes. In these conditions many farmers have become displaced from export markets as the technological, capital and logistic criteria for entry to markets are raised.. Larger-scale farm units and more restrictive networks of production dominate the main commercial crop sectors. Within this setting the African states are pressurised into creating suitable infrastructures, institutional reforms and quality control standards as a precondition for investment by transnational agribusiness. Increasingly this includes the creation of land markets and release of land for agribusiness development. These developments have also created suitable environments for other investors in agricultural industries, outside of the main value chains within transnational agribusiness and supermarket retailers. While many of the investments occur in low population areas beyond the perimeters of the main export producing zones, they contribute to the gradual process of transforming the agrarian structure through new processes of accumulation and dispossessing the poor and they reflect these trends.

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