

**POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SLEEPING GIANTS IN
THE GUINEA SAVANNA**

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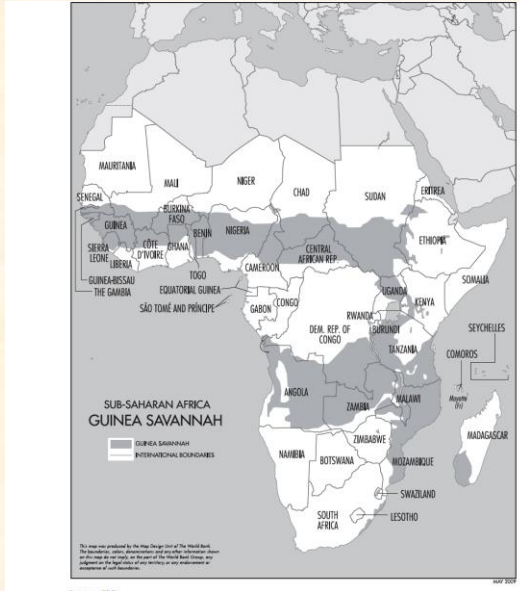
What constitutes the Guinea Savannah?

a belt running around the high forest zone in Africa with a rainfall of between 800-1,200 and a growing season of 150-210 days.

It estimates that it constitutes 600 million hectares of which about 400 million can be used for agriculture, of which less than 10 percent are cropped. Thus the Guinea Savannah comprises a low population area and “one of the largest land reserves in the world”.

Population is unevenly distributed within the Guinea Savannah, with some densely populated areas such as the Mossi plateau in Burkina, Upper East region in Ghana and parts of northern Nigeria and Ethiopia.

A zone of outmigration in which people have migrated to other areas. About one third of the population of Cote D’Ivoire consists of migrants from the Guinea Savannah zone of West African Sahelian countries.



The population is also historically highly differentiated with some societies that were acephalous and others hierarchical with servile peasantries from which rents were extracted. This is overlooked in many frameworks for decentralised customary-oriented tenure reform

The Case Studies

Why does the report select Nigeria, Zambia and Mozambique as case studies of the Guinea Savannah and none of the many landlocked Sahelian country that depend on agricultural resources?

Settling in Zambia

Zimbabwe's Displaced Farmers Find a New Home

By Thilo Thielke

As white farmers leave Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa in droves, they are being welcomed with open arms north of the Zambezi River, in Zambia. Many who have moved here to start a new life have managed to achieve record-breaking harvests in their adopted country.



Many of these displaced farmers from the southern tip of Africa appear to have found a new home in Zambia -- at least temporarily. About 300 Zimbabwean farmers have settled in the former Northern Rhodesia, where they are now running 150 farms with astonishing success.

Ever since the first settlers were chased out of Zimbabwe by Mugabe's thugs and started new lives in neighboring Zambia a few years ago, the Zambian economy has been booming. "Zambia is Africa's success story," says Guy Robinson, the president of the Zambia National Farmers Union.



“While white farmers are branded as racists and colonialists in Zimbabwe and, to some extent, in Namibia, other African countries have welcomed them with open arms. Leaders across Africa, from Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to the heads of state of Mozambique and Malawi, are more than happy to have them settle in their countries. Even Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni is courting Mugabe's outcasts. “

Spiegel Online International 12/27/2004

Mozambique

Moz welcomes white farmers

2003-02-02

News 24.com

Stephane Barbier

<http://www.news24.com/Africa/Moz-welcomes-white-farmers-20030202>

Chimoio, Mozambique - Mozambique counts on settling white farmers who have lost land in Zimbabwe for its own development, but officials here have also taken precautions to prevent any export of the farm conflict.

Cremildo Rundo, deputy head of agriculture and rural development in Manica province, where about 50 landowners are beginning a new life, said: "We see the Zimbabwean farmers as investors, not as refugees."

Nigeria

Zim, **South African white farmers head for Nigeria**

AfrolNews, 10 September 2004?

The Nigerian state Kwara is offering commercial farmers from Zimbabwe and South Africa, mostly of British origin, land to invest and resettle. A delegation from South Africa invited by Kwara state currently is investigating the offer.

The main purpose was to "bring in foreign investors" to Kwara state, according to Mr Saraki. In a later statement, the Governor added that "the state stands to benefit from the huge resources, international finance and high tech equipment available to the displaced farmers."

The Kwara government further has indicated it considers handing out land for free to interested Zimbabwean and South African commercial farmers. The relatively densely populated region was said to have large tracts of unexploited but fertile lands. In Kwara, however, the question has been raised, whose land Governor Saraki will be giving away, as many farmers in the state hunger for more land.

According to the Kwara Governor, however, giving under-exploited land resources to experienced commercial farmers - willing to invest in new technology and infrastructure and create jobs and new markets - could only be to the benefit of all parties.

Nigeria's agricultural success story and ex-Zimbabwean farmers

Nigeria's Shonga is the new Harare

One of the less-popular towns of Nigeria, Shonga, is gradually fast becoming a food hub in both Nigeria and Africa, thanks to white Zimbabwean farmers expelled by Robert Mugabe in early 2000. During the heightened land ownership and race row in Zimbabwe that had since crippled the southern African country's economy, the government of Kwara State in Nigeria banked on the opportunity to lure the displaced farmers to Shonga in what is now deemed a 'success' by observers.

Huge tonnes of cassava, soya beans and maize are now harvested for local use and for export trade. "This is the Garden of Eden for us, everything grows here. It has been exciting coming here. I am doing what I love to do, which is to feed people, it is what I have done all my life," said Graham Hatty, 70, who was famous in Zimbabwe for the winter wheat crop he grew. "It is quite ironic, I am here in Nigeria and I am told I am the biggest individual cassava grower in the country with 600 hectares of cassava in the ground," he said.

Muritala Bakare

Afrik.com 26 November 2009

<http://en.afrik.com/article16541.html>

Commercial Farming in Nigeria not an unqualified success

“To date, the Zimbabwean farmers say, the maize and soya yields have been disappointing. "It's just too hot," says Reid. In Zimbabwe, Reid could expect at least eight tonnes of yield per hectare, compared with just four tonnes in Nigeria. "And in Zimbabwe, the inputs [such as fertilizer and seeds] were cheaper," says Reid. Like most of the other farmers, Reid has decided there's more money to be made from dairy or poultry farming, but that's required more expensive investment in milking and slaughtering facilities.”

Sarah Simpson

Christian Science Monitor May 2 2008

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2008/0502/p04s01-woaf.html/%28page%29/2>

Commercial agriculture in Africa

Underlying the *Sleeping Giants* report are debates which arose in the context of land reform in southern Africa in early 2000s and which came to focus on the role of large-scale mechanised agriculture.

Those favouring the retention of large-scale capitalist agriculture argued that the efficiency of smallholder agriculture was based on assumptions rather than proven cases and that this ignored the “interests” of agricultural labour and the impacts of mechanised agriculture on employment.

Retention of commercial agriculture in Southern Africa undermines the basis of reform of agriculture based on state support for smallholders as efficient agricultural policy.

A number of African states began to import commercial farmers and models of commercial farming from southern Africa to build up their commercial agriculture within the Guinea Savannah zone. While this has not received much attention in academia, this signalled the interest in forest investment in large-scale commercial agriculture which preceded the subsequent investment of Chinese and biofuel companies in Africa from the 2007/2008 period of the World Food Crisis.

World Bank smallholders vrs Bigholders

This has also led to debates/divisions within the World Bank between adherents of smallholder agricultural development and proponents of foreign investment in mechanized agriculture.

These approaches are externalised within the report between a Brazilian Cerrado mechanised model and a Northeast Thailand smallholder model.

The southern African debate is alluded to in the report which characterises the “success” of settler farms of southern and eastern Africa as the creation of colonial interventions, preferential policies and subsidies, while admitting that mechanised large agriculture can be appropriate under certain conditions including low population and lack of labour – characteristics of the Guinea Savannah.

(What about state subsidies and support for agriculture in Cerrada?)

History of debates about peasant and capitalist agriculture in policy in Africa

Under colonialism three distinct modes of organising agriculture:

1. Peasant – monopsony colonial marketing companies and independent peasant producers, or peasant producers organised by powerful trading groups such as the Mourides in Senegal
2. Concessionary company – in the Congo basin, in which land sold to private companies who had rights to expropriate resources within territory and organise African labour coercively for production, and organise infrastructure.
3. Settler, in Southern and Eastern Africa and Algeria – in which farmers from the metropolis migrated alongside other settlers (miners) and demanded land, or where colonial authority had difficulty in organising dispersed and acephalous societies for export oriented production

Peasant production under colonial rule

Peasant agriculture was the favoured mode, since it was the easiest to administer and produced less social contradictions or the colonial administration arising from land alienation), could be effectively organised to produce export crops cheaply; and did not require considerable support as did settler colonisation.

Under French colonialism peasant production in West Africa fared much better than the concession system in the Congo, and in the Côte d'Ivoire where an expatriate plantation sector co-existed with African peasant production the settler economy struggled.

Peasant production exemplified by cocoa in West Africa with Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire producing about 80 percent of world supplies

Agricultural zones under colonial rule

The success of the export agricultural sector (whether settler or peasant) was dependent upon the import of cheap labour into the major export growing zones, which was organised as seasonal migrant labour or sharecrop labour.

Three distinct zones of production emerged:

1. Export cropping zones
2. Food producing zones to cater for the growth of urbanisation and deficiency of food production in monocrop export crop production zones.
3. Labour reserves which provided the main sources of labour for export crops, which tend to be situated in the Guinea savannah zone (but also in drylands to the north). Forced labour and taxation policies were introduced to encourage migration into the export crop zones. Agriculture tended to be produced largely for self provisioning, providing a social safety net for the cheap reproduction families of migrant labourers.

A fourth zone beyond this was a pastoral zone, producing meat for major market centres in the export producing zone. Malian pastoralists in Gao took their cattle to Kumasi and Nigerien pastoralists to Ibadan.

Agricultural Policies in the Guinea Savannah 1940-1980

- Little attempt at agricultural development in this zone until 1940s when growing concerns about increasing food imports and increasing urban demands for food.
- By 1950s colonial states introduce large scale mechanised agricultural projects for vegetable oils and food production, combining mechanisation with re-settled peasant labour groups drawn from specific ethnic groups.
Most of these projects disappointing and poorly adapted to the ecologies of the area.
- After independence experimentation in large scale mechanised cultivation, development of irrigation, seed improvement, etc. was continued by the state.
- Late 1960s and early 1970s large private sector mechanised agriculture was promoted by the state with subsidies and soft loans.
large scale commercial farmers/ state enterprises failed to produce significant percentages of crops.
- By mid 1970s many African states had turned to the World Bank smallholder approach, based on contractual relations with smallholder farmers organised into groups on agric. development schemes, access to land and resources was dependent upon adopting prescribed crops and cropping recommendations- New varieties, and synthetic inputs, mechanised services and loans
Resistance of peasantry to coercive agrarian development, contract farmer schemes, the uncaptured peasantry

World Crisis and Sahelian drought in 1970s

Impacts on agriculture:

- unfavourable prices for export commodities
- Increasing prices for synthetic inputs
- Increasing risk in production
- Difficulties in loan repayments often resulting in banking crisis
- Adoption of structural adjustment
- Increased outmigration from Guinea savannah (most notably from Burkina, Mali into Côte d'Ivoire)
- Decline of national agriculture sector support and rise of NGOs filling in gaps

Agricultural Policies 1980s-1990s

Privatisation of national agricultural services. However in many countries capacity in seed production only began to be built up in late 1970s and 1980s and private sector reluctant to invest in these areas since they were poorly developed

Removal of subsidies and lack of well developed private sector dealers resulting in comparative high prices for inputs and declining input usage among small farmers

Emphasis on export oriented growth led to a major focus on export crops during a period when international agribusiness and supermarket chains began to develop interests in African supplies

Environmental Concerns

Drought lead to increasing environmental concerns. Three manifestations;

Farming systems research began to model risk and uncertainty in African agriculture, importance of multi-cropping and farmers own resistant varieties. Indigenous agricultural revolution

NGO interventions tended to focus on tree planting initiatives, soil and water conservation, bullock ploughing and agroforestry.

Promotion in NARS and International Centres of intensive agriculture based on inputs and blame allocated to extensive smallholder agriculture. Reflected in hostile policies towards peasantry

- Policies to discourage extensive land use and shifting cultivation. Encourage sedentarisation and use of synthetic inputs. Crisis narratives. Bans on bush burning. In Mali in 1980s taxes introduced on new land clearing.

Crisis narratives discouraging bush following

Policies to discourage extensive land use and shifting cultivation. Encourage sedentarisation and use of synthetic inputs. Crisis narratives. Bans of bush burning. In Mali in 1980s taxes introduced on new land clearing.

“The low-input extensification of agriculture currently taking place in many areas is exacting especially high environmental costs through deforestation and land degradation, loss of biodiversity, and release of sequestered carbon in soils and trees. A more intensive pattern of land use based on the use of fertilizer and other soil amendments can reduce these costs by reducing land conversion rates. “ (Sleeping Giants p.20)

Increasingly, the insights of farming systems research on farmers’ strategies are relegated to the background in place of farmers using inputs and new seeds bred by brilliant scientists that are drought resistant, striga resistant, resistant to poor soils, and adapted to all manners of conditions and circumstances, but which always have some problems with them.

Increasing social differentiation in agriculture

Policies of facilitating production in particular promoted export and commercial sectors while hindering and creating negative incentives for other sectors has created increasing social differentiation.

Recent policy frameworks

Stepping up - encouraging increasing intensification

Stepping out- facilitating the movement out of agriculture of the rural poor, the uncaptured peasantry

'Preparing people to migrate out of agriculture is the flipside of the economy's structural transformation as agriculture grows' (World Development Report 2008: 248)

Land reform

Land reform has been largely pushed by donors increasingly as a way of ensuring an “equitable” distribution of land in which commercial smallholders can gain access to land and security in land, but also as a way of consolidating land holdings.

Emphasis on forms of decentralised land reform based on customary management does not take into account the wide variety of customary systems including systems that are premised on social inequality.

The promotion of marketable rights erodes the rights of those who recycle and move between different types of land including pastoralists and shifting cultivators

“The National Land Policy [in Mozambique] also has not always been able to deal effectively with conflicts between smallholders who practice extensive shifting cultivation and commercial farmers. These conflicts have erupted with some regularity in highly productive areas, such as the fertile flood plains along the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers.’ (Sleeping Giants 154-5)

Who are the African smallholders?

Often very precise figures on smallholders but no description of their strategies and resources

“There are around 33M small farms — roughly, those with less than two hectares — in Africa, representing 80% of all farms, with an average size of 1.6 ha. “

Different types of farms:

- Extensive shifting agriculture
- Intensive compound land cultivation with permanent cropping and use of manure
- Intensive compound cultivation under management control of house elder with more extensive use of shifting cultivation by women and youth on outfields or bush plots
- Commercial cotton cultivation with inputs
- Monocultural groundnut cultivation

Forms of land reform and agricultural support that promote fixed use of land and more intensive forms of cultivation, or alienation of low populated bush areas to investors may adversely impact on women and youth, and intensify intra-family struggles over access to land, control of labour and of the resources of migrant labour.

Complex movement patterns and regional migrations

- Farming systems often incorporate both land resources that are intensively used with other resources which are extensively used, creating unfounded perceptions of plentiful land. Removal of low populated land use forms often results in perceptions of land hunger and resource scarcity.
- Difficulties in the Guinea savannah have resulted in a continuation of outmigration. However, migrants do not always have security in their homes as witnessed by the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. Thus homeland continue to play important roles in social welfare and security and the circulation of remittances

Back to the Future

Immanuel Wallerstein in (1974) “Three Stages of African Involvement in the World Economy”, in P.C.W. Gutkind and I. Wallerstein, *Political Economy of Contemporary Africa The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa*

Space-age farms, modern cattle ranches and lush market gardens in the middle of the Sahara... This is no mirage. It is what experts from six of the world's most backward nations have conjured up for the future. The idea is to roll back the desert and turn their drought-ravaged countries into a fertile green belt of productive crop land and pasture.... It could eventually turn the subsistence economies of the West African nations of Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Upper Volta into a vegetable garden for Europe and a vast beef belt.

The emptying of the land areas will provide the space for an immense mechanization of African primary production, whether controlled by cooperatives, the state, multinational corporations, or some combination thereof, permitting dramatic “development” of export crops when the new moment of world economic expansion begins.

“The principle consequence for the third zone, the so called subsistence sector, clearing the land areas of men and largely sounding the death knell for the concept of a semiproletarian labor force. The “reserve army of the unemployed” will thus become visible but also will have to be kept alive by some process of social redistribution of income.” Emmanuel Wallerstein

Improving the livelihood of subsistence smallholders and unskilled laborers often also requires food aid, cash transfers and pensions for the aged. These improvements require massive investments in human capital for the next generation to avoid intergenerational transfers of poverty associated with dismally low educational levels in rural areas.
World Development Report 2008; 228

Conclusion

The smallholder approach is really about promoting a middle to rich accumulating agricultural strata that are able to appropriate land from the subsistence sector for incorporation into export markets and agribusiness food chains. This accumulation is carried out by a significant number of farmers, localising processes of accumulation preventing the glaring contradictions that are so obvious in large commercial expropriations.

However, both approaches are not exclusive. The conditions that enable smallholders to gain access to property for commercial agricultural development also facilitates acquisition of land by large commercial developers.

Smallholder cultivation facilitates the gradual expropriation of land and the internalisation of processes of accumulation within the community.

In both approaches problems exist with what to do with expropriated subsistence farmers, particular since the retention of subsistence agriculture functions as a safety net in lieu of social welfare.

Conclusion 2

The expansion of commercial agriculture within the Guinea Savannah is constrained by the lack of social support services to absorb appropriation of land. The development of commercial agriculture in labour reserve areas results in the social costs of high unemployment and social welfare as in South Africa.

These high cost mean that the preservation of smallholder agriculture is not a romantic option and in previous epochs governments have baulked from the expropriation of peasant farmers.

Large-scale mechanised agriculture is only likely to be a preferred option where existing conditions act as a bottleneck against smallholder accumulation, or where there is considerable resistance to integration into agribusiness food chains.

Last thoughts

Conditions within the Guinea Savannah will probably result in a coexistence of rich smallholder commercial agriculture in pockets alongside a few large-scale mechanised industries, and a longer term process of hostile policy environments for the rural poor shifting cultivators, impoverishment and outmigration of poorer farmers.

This will result in a mixture of declining older self provisioning food sectors and the emergence of smaller sectors of prosperous export-oriented farmers and debates whether this signifies agricultural development or stagnation.