Emerging Agricultural Land Issues among Smallholder Farmers in Kenya

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Conclusion #1

There is evidence of increasing conflicts over land
Conclusion #2

Land scarcity is becoming a binding agricultural production constraint because of mounting population pressure.
Increasing population densities

• Population densities in Kenya are much higher than they were two decades ago
  • Some areas are more densely populated than Nairobi city was in 1980s—e.g. Vihiga, Emuhaya, Kisii, Mukurweini
• Population growth is contributing to growing land pressures and diminishing land sizes
Population density in Kenya
Conclusion #3

Growing land pressures and declining land sizes are contributing to unsustainable forms of agricultural intensification
Agricultural intensification

- Are increasing population densities inducing innovations aimed at intensifying the use of land?
- Mounting population pressure is resulting in unsustainable forms of agricultural intensification in some counties
  - Reduced fallow periods, soil mining, depleted soil organic matter, increasing soil acidity
Agricultural intensification in Kenya

Figure 1: Area cultivated per household

Figure 2: Total value of cash expenditures per ha cultivated

Figure 3: Net farm income per hectare cultivated

Figure 4: Non-farm income per household
# Agricultural intensification in Kenya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population density (persons/km² of arable land)</th>
<th>% of population (excluding urban areas)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0&lt;den&lt;=200</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200&lt;den&lt;=400</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400&lt;den&lt;=600</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600&lt;den&lt;=800</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800&lt;den</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion #4

It is almost certainly the case that agricultural growth will require bringing new land under cultivation.
Who is getting access to the remaining unutilized land?

- Most governments’ strategies on agricultural growth and food security assume unhindered access to land
- The changing farm structure in Africa
- The rise of medium-scale farms reflects a rising demand for prime land by upper-class urban elites
- Farmland held by medium- and large-scale domestic owners is possibly grossly under-reported
How productive are the medium-scale farms?

Figure 2b: Farm and crop income per hectare planted

Figure 2a: Value of crop production per hectare planted

Figure 5a: Total crop production costs per hectare planted

Figure 6: Total crop production costs by components
Who are the medium-scale farmers?

• About 60% used non-farm entry pathway into medium scale farming
• Urban and rural elites
• Using their savings from their non-farm jobs
• They are relatively well-educated
• Cultivate less than 50% of their land
Optimism that small-scale farms can expand

- Only a small proportion of medium-scale farmers started out with less than five hectares of land.
- At least some room for optimism that small farms can expand into medium-scale stature under favorable conditions including access to land.
Conclusion #5

Migration is a potential strategy for dealing with increasing land constraints
Rural to rural migration

• Migration to more sparsely populated rural areas has the potential of relieving land pressures in densely populated rural areas

• Provided that land continues to be accessible in the receiving areas and tribal conflicts do not arise
Rural to urban migration

- **Pull factors:** Match education/skills with off-farm employment needs
- **Push factors:** Urban migration is occurring at too rapid a pace to prevent rising unemployment and underemployment
Conclusion #6

Looming employment challenge in sub-Saharan Africa
Looming employment challenge in SSA

Age pyramid: rural SSA, 2015

- 62% < 25 years old
Policy implication [I]

• Sustainable agricultural intensification:
  • Need to move from a situation where ISPs are the cornerstone of agricultural development to a holistic program of sustainable productivity growth?
Policy implication [II]

• Access to land
  
  • Largely determine whether millions of rural Africans will make a decent livelihood and be able to feed themselves

• This will depend on how supportive the land allocation and agricultural policies are to smallholders
Policy implication [III]

- African leaders may soon perceive that political stability will depend on the profitability of family farming