Emerging Agricultural Land Issues in Kenya

Milu Muyanga & TS Jayne

Conclusion #1

There is evidence of increasing conflicts over land
Kibaki finally gazettes land commission

Land grab or development opportunity?

Man hacks four family members to death over land

Why Qatar-Tana River land deal requires further discussion

Land issue takes centre stage in campaigns

Poll: Voters believe leaders

Kenyans Must End This Obsession With Land

Kenya Elections

Killed in fresh violence over land in Kenya

JHURU and RAILA's camps should stop using the LAND ISSUE in campaigns

Kenya's problems are rooted in the land

Qatar looks to grow food in Kenya
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 was in 1980s—Vihiga, Emuhaya, Kisii, Mukurweini, etc
- Population growth is contributing to growing land pressures and diminishing land sizes
Population density in Kenya
Conclusion #3

Population growth in densely populated smallholder farming areas is contributing to growing land pressures and unsustainable forms of agricultural intensification
Agricultural intensification

• Productivity growth on existing farmland will be the most desirable way of raising food production

• Will minimize the competition for remaining arable land and adverse environmental impacts
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
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>
</tr>
</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><strong>total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Agricultural intensification in Kenya

Source: AfriPop for 2010
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?

- The rise of medium-scale farms reflects a rising demand for prime land by upper-class urban and rural people.
- Income growth in urban areas is contributing to land scarcity and higher land prices in Kenya.
- Farmland held by large-scale domestic owners is possibly grossly under-reported.
Medium-scale farms productivity

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 in Kenya?

- About 59% 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-scale farms can expand into commercialized 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 urban migration

- Urban migration is occurring at too rapid a pace to prevent rising unemployment and underemployment
  - Match education/skills with off-farm employment needs
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.
Conclusion #7

Most governments’ existing strategies are **officially** oriented to promote agricultural growth and food security for the millions of their rural constituents who are smallholders.
Government policy orientation

• However, most of these strategies assume unhindered access to land

• Income growth in urban areas is contributing to land scarcity and higher land prices in Kenya

• Farmland held by large-scale domestic owners is possibly grossly under-reported

• Is the smallholder-led agricultural transformation feasible in Kenya?
The land access policy will determine whether a high proportion of young Africans are gainfully employed in agriculture or join the ranks of the urban unemployed, constituting huge political risks for African leaders.