National Land Conference on Emerging Land Issues in Kenyan Agriculture and Their Implications for Food Policy and Institutional Reforms

Joint Press Briefing by Kenya Land Alliance and Michigan State University

Breakfast Press Briefing at Laico Regency Hotel, Nairobi, October 28 & 29, 2014
Issues 1

Is Africa a land abundant continent?
Land availability in African countries

- According to WB, potentially arable but uncultivated (PAC) land estimated at 446 million hectares of uncultivated arable land in the world.
- 202 million hectares are found in Africa.
- However, these early estimates are very optimistic.
- Revised estimates by MSU researchers using refined GIS data estimate PAC in Africa at about 100 million and lower depending on assumptions.
Characteristics of PAC

- The region's underutilized land resources are concentrated in 4-5 countries –
  - DRC (47%- 84 million), Angola (10.4%), Congo (7.1%), Zambia (5.9%), Cameroon (5.7%), Mozambique (4.9%), CAR (3.9%), Gabon (3.6%), …, Kenya (0.4% - 0.8 million hectares)
- Many of which are fragile states
- Forest cover - conversion of forests to cropland would entail major environmental costs
- Located far from input and output markets-- Limiting their economic attractiveness
Issue 2

Increasing conflicts over land
Local analysts point to historical land injustices as the main cause of the 2007 post-election violence and the 2014 killings in the coastal region of Kenya.
Issues 3

Land scarcity is becoming a binding agricultural production constraint
Increasing population densities

- Population densities in sub-Saharan Africa are much higher than they were two decades ago
  - Some districts in Kenya are more densely populated than Nairobi was in 1980s
- Population growth is contributing to growing land pressures and diminishing land sizes
- Land holding in SSA has declined from about 1 hectare of arable land per person in 1960 to less 0.2 hectares in 2010
- Africa rural population is projected to grow by 48% in the next 35 years
Shrinking farm sizes

Arable land per capita
1960-2010

Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank
Total rural population projections

Source: UN Pop Council, 2013
Dealing with shrinking land sizes

• **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 extensification** - it is almost certainly the case that agricultural growth will require bringing new land under cultivation.

• **Migration** – rural to rural; rural to urban
Agricultural intensification

- Are increasing population densities inducing innovations aimed at intensifying the use of land?
  - Consistent with the induced innovation theories of Boserup (1965) and Ruttan and Hayami (1971)
- 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 4: Net crop income per hectare cultivated

Signs of unsustainable agricultural intensification—reduced fallows periods; soil mining; soil acidity; etc.
# 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=200</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200&lt;den=400</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400&lt;den=600</td>
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<td>600&lt;den=800</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800&lt;den</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Agricultural intensification in Kenya

Source: AfriPop for 2010
Issues 4

Agricultural extensification strategy – changing farm structure
Changing farm structure

• Rise of medium-scale farms over the last 10 years in Africa
• Farmers cultivating between 5 to 100 hectares
• Medium-scale farms now control more land than large-scale foreign and domestic investors in Kenya (0.84 vs. 0.69 million hectares)
• Medium-scale farms are generally found to produce a greater value of output per hectare cultivated compared to smallholders
• They contribute more than 60% in production and marketed surplus
Changing farm structure

- Who are the medium-scale farmers?
  - Urban and rural elites
  - Using their savings from their non-farm jobs
  - They are relatively well-educated
  - Cultivate less than 50% of their land
  - This profile fits roughly 59 percent of the sampled medium-scale farmers in Kenya and 58 percent in Zambia
Changing farm structure

• Medium-scale farmers whose primary employment has been in farming for many years are more productive than urban professionals and business people counterparts.
• Only a small proportion of medium-scale farmers started out with less than five hectares of land.
• Provide at least some room for optimism that small-scale farmers can expand into commercialized medium-scale stature under favorable conditions including access to land.
Issue 5

Off-farm & migration strategy
Off-farm employment

• About 62% of Kenya’s rural population is below the age of 25 years
• Projections of non-farm employment expansion indicate that only 2/3 of the additional 19 million young workers entering Kenya’s labor force before 2035 will be able to find wage jobs
• This means that farming will be called upon to provide gainful employment for at least a third of Kenya’s young labor force
• However, for agriculture to successfully provide employment, young people will require access to land
Migration

• Migration (rural to rural; rural to urban) is a potential strategy for dealing with increasing land constraints
• Urban migration is occurring at too rapid a pace to prevent rising unemployment and underemployment
• 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
Land rental markets

- Land rental markets are developing rapidly in more densely-populated areas.
- The rise of land rental markets may provide some potential for the youth to access land, but because renting land involves paying rents amounting to one-third or more of the value of the crops produced on the rented land, tenants must be extremely productive to make a reasonable livelihood by renting land.
Conclusion
Conclusion

• Most governments’ existing strategies are *officially* oriented to promote agricultural growth and food security for the millions of their rural constituents who are small-scale farmers

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

• 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. Namwaya (2004) reports that over 600,000 hectares, or roughly one-seventh of Kenya’s total farmland, are held by some privileged families in the country
Conclusion

• In spite of rhetorical support for small-scale farmers, there are increasing concerns that *de facto* agricultural and land policies have encouraged, and are continuing to encourage, the transfer of land to medium- and large-scale interests without due recognition of how this is affecting land access by future generations of indigenous rural communities.

• 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 political risks for African leaders.