Triennial International Conference of Agricultural Economists, Milan, Italy
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**Plenary Session: Changing Global Farm Structure and Agricultural Land Use**

**Organizers:** Thomas Jayne (Michigan State University) and Derek Byerlee (Georgetown University)

This plenary session explores the dynamic relationships between land policies, changing farm land ownership, and value chain development both globally and in three important regions of the world – China, Brazil, and Africa. Over the course of several decades, the global distribution of farm land has changed radically. We identify the causes and consequences of changing farm land ownership and use, including its impacts on the pace and nature of structural transformation.

**Session presentations:**

  
  **Abstract:** Outside of the sizeable literature on the environmental consequences of agricultural expansion, the causes and consequences of the evolution of farming land are often paid only scant attention, perhaps because – over the short run – farm size area and expansion change relatively slowly. However, over the medium term, the global distribution of farming land has changed radically, both in absolute terms and per capita terms. This paper demonstrates this by systematically analyzing patterns and trends in the global distribution of farming land. We establish 5 important stylized facts about the evolution of global farming land and attempt to explain them with different sorts of evidence.

- **Institutional Innovation and Policy Support to Facilitate Small-Scale Farming Transformation in China.** Jikun Huang and Jiping Ding, Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy, Chinese Academy of Sciences
  
  **Abstract:** The emerging trend of middle and large farms (tens and hundreds of hectares) in China is striking. There is a silent revolution transforming Chinese agriculture from small-scale dominated system to one that is more productive and characterized by full-time farmers with relatively high family income. These trends are expected to accelerate in the years to come. These developments may involve a major decoupling between land ownership and management. We consider how changes in farm scale have affected productivity and profitability, food security, and overall agricultural development. The presentation concludes that particular forms of institutional innovation and policy support are needed to further transform China’s farm system.

- **The Evolving Role Of Large And Middle Size Farms in Brazilian Agriculture.** Joaquim Bento de Souza Ferreira Filho and Carlos Eduardo de Freitas Vian, Escola Superior de Agricultura “Luiz de Queiroz”, University of São Paulo
  
  **Abstract:** We have compiled data from the Brazilian agricultural censuses since 1970 to describe how farm land structure and production patterns have been evolving in Brazil. Agriculture is now expanding toward new frontiers, in northeast Brazil and the Amazon rainforest, apparently based on the same structural patterns that prevailed in the 1970s. We report farm production and productivity measures by farm size
category and show that in some important regions of Brazil medium-scale farms are actually the dominant pattern, even for the most important export commodities. We document the evolution of this “middle” in Brazil, and discuss the factors behind this “dual” structure in commercial farms despite the existence of strong size economies.

- **Africa’s Changing Farmland Ownership: The Rise of the Emergent Investor Farmer**, T. Jayne (Michigan State University), Jordan Chamberlin (Michigan State University), Lulama Ndibongo Traub (University of Stellenbosch), Nicholas Sitko (Michigan State University), Milu Muyanga (Michigan State University) Chewe Nkonde (Michigan State University), Ward Anseeuw (University of Pretoria), Antony Chapoto (Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute), and Richard Kachule (Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources)

  **Abstract:** Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing major changes in farm land ownership and use, which are both cause and consequence of the economic transformations that the region is now experiencing. The rapid rise in the number of farms in the 5 to 100 hectare category represents a relatively hidden but revolutionary change in farm structure, reflecting major new investment in land by urban-based professionals, government employees and rural elites. These fast-evolving changes in farm land ownership are also driving related changes in farm technology (e.g., mechanization) and agricultural value chains. We consider the developmental implications of these trends.

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