

Land Grabbing and Rural Poverty: Lessons Learned from Western Ethiopia

Hossein Azadi

Senior researcher, Department of Geography, Ghent University, Belgium.

Email: hossein.azadi@ugent.be

Since two decades ago, when China's economic strength has made this most populated country as a leading global agricultural outsourcer, there have increasingly been hot debates on whether such outsourcing is destructive or constructive, especially for developing countries such as Ethiopia. The government of Ethiopia, with the assumption of attracting agricultural investment inflow, is hosting transnational companies by serving them with million hectares of land in long-term leases. These land acquisitions have raised serious concerns about their impacts on local poor people who risk losing access to and control over their land on which they fully depend. Accordingly, the main objective of this study was to explore the consequences of land grabbing on local communities and family farming in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, Western Ethiopia. Results showed that land grabbing has not only worsened rural poverty but also resulted in a significant loss in the environment of local communities while no significant infrastructures are offered by outsourcers.

Keywords: agricultural outsourcing, land deal, food security, poverty, rural livelihood, small-scale farming.