



Voluntary Land transaction and their implications for agricultural sustainability: a case study of Land grabbing dynamics in Ala, Leguru and Irangu Communities, Odogbolu L.G.A, Ogun State

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Abstract

A ninety three day on-field research work via the use of well-structured and standardized Close-ended questionnaires was randomly conducted on the three local farming Communities of Ala, Leguru and Irangu under the Odogbolu Local Government Area of Ogun State to determine and analyse their farming activities levels of awareness and value reliability to the menace of land grab phenomenon in Agriculture as a global epidermy. The idea and concern was born out of sudden and overwhelming emergence of Estate Developers and Agents who had shown up to acquire hundreds of acres of farmlands along the newly reconstructed nodal Ala-Omu-Ajjah road well noted for cassava farming by the local farmers. The research instrument used were well structured and standardized Close - ended questionnaires, that were administered at random to a group of carefully selected and targeted individuals, particularly farmers and land owners within these Communities. A 100 questionnaires were administered to randomly select 33 individuals and or Respondents in each of the three Communities. And results were analysed using a simple descriptive statistics, particularly the measure of central tendency, notably percentage distribution, frequency of occurrence and bar charts. Results showed that farmers and other farmland owners in these Communities were never victims of land grabs as previously anticipated before the conduct of the research. They had willingly given out their lands for sale to the foreign investors and Estate Developers most importantly for financial benefit, fear of land grab by Government and lack of governmental assistance in their farming practices. It was hence deduced that though there was no direct form of land grabs as the native willingly gave out their lands but the development is detrimental to the region agricultural production, development and food security, particular Cassava production and could be regarded as land grab in agriculture. It was then recommended that the locals should throw caution in giving out more of their farmlands, highlighting the future implications, while the government must do more to empower local communities' farmers.

Keywords: Awareness, Developers, Farmlands, Land grab, Local Communities, Vulnerability

INTRODUCTION

The issue of agricultural farmlands grab across the world particularly in Africa and other Pacific and Caribbeans countries, including as well some Southern American nations have generated so much controversies since ages past and in the advent of modern civilization,

industrial revolution and global population explosion. Acquisition of large expanse of arable lands good for farming in thousands of hectares by wealthy and rich countries of the world from poor nations have for long become a subject of global debate and discussion with so much spotlights being given to it by the media. World industrialist have argued it as a necessary and needed step towards global industrial development, technological transfer and particularly food security to meet rising global population and technological needs. While in the same shoes some as well perceived it as a form of needed global investment for commercial development and growth but Critics the world over and the media have

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always considered it as a form of irreversible land ownership transfer that is termed "land grab". Acquisition of rich fertile agricultural lands of poorer nations by the wealthy ones. This faction or other side of the argument perceived the scenario as a form of modern day slavery and colonization. Nevertheless, land grab is a clear pointer to the issue of global rush for the world farmlands, a new phase of the world food crisis, and an attempt towards global food security. But the secrecy of the deals and the short changing of the host countries together with non-involvement of the locals who are original owners and users of these lands by the presumably the invading foreign countries has mared the seemingly good intentions of the development which has invariably lead to it's being termed land grab by the concerned stake holders and individuals.

Very rich nations of the world from the Arab states, European Countries, the United States and as well as China, Japan and South Korea from Asian Continent with limited land resources and less fertile agricultural farmlands, together with a population explosion experience have all been prompted almost into a rush for fertile farmlands available mostly within the locations of the third world countries and poorer nations of ACP countries, including some South American nations. Countries like South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Congo, Tanzania, Ghana, etc. in Africa, including Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Cambodia, Brazil, and Ecuador have for long been victims of land grab issues from other foreign rich countries needs for agricultural farm land, biofuel energy and other forms of industrial revolutionary needs.

Foreign acquisition of agric lands has become a hot and widely discussed issue across the globe. Though the recent and age-long spate of overseas farm land acquisition is global in nature but Africa may be the biggest hot spot (Jeremy Hance, 2011). And according to a joint study by the Foods and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Institute for Environmental Development and the International Funds for Agric Development, it had been reported that since the year 2004 there have been nearly 2.5 million hectares worth of approved land allocation effected and transacted in just five African countries of Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali and Sudan. Africa is a global choice for agricultural investors as the continent

possesses fertile farm lands, ample water and human capital resources (Susan Payne BBC News, 2009). Yet, and because of some of the world's lowest farming productivity, governments in Africa are always desperate for help, with majority so eager to cede their lands to foreign Investors in a bid to attract development, combat poverty and hunger. But invariably, with an outcome of illusive promises for Infrastructural development and jobs opportunities (Micheal et. al., 2009). Paradoxically, many of these African countries who relinquish their farmlands to foreign Investors are themselves languishing in food shortage insecurity, depending hugely on foreign and International food aids. For instance, The New York Times, 2024 reported of Ethiopia receiving a whopping \$116 million from The World Food Programme on food aids, and only for the country to as well get paid a sum of \$100 million US Dollars by Saudi Arabia to help grow grains for the Arab nation domestic and homeland consumption. Same paper reported Sudan receiving a sum of £1 Billion worth of food aids from International donors, only for the country to still manage growing Wheat for Saudi Arabia, Tomatoes for Jordan, and Sorghum for United Arab Emirates Livestock.

Micheal et al., (2009) also reported on a deal concerning a US based Firm (Dominion Farms) which acquired about 3,600 Hectares of farmland in Western Kenya for a whopping 45 years. Just like Sudan leased out a staggering 1.5 million Hectares of her prime farmland to a combination of the Gulf States, Egypt and South Korea for 99 years. Same Authors reported Egypt acquisition of 840,000 Hectares of farmland in Uganda intended to farm grains. There are so many of these shady deals concerning land grabs across the African Continent being perpetrated by the World rich nations under the disguise of global food security but with the produce being taken away to foreign lands. Sympathetically, African nations are very poor and the government cannot but take the baits of financial gains being anticipated in such land acquisition deals, as well as infrastructural development promises that always don't see the light of the day. Foreign invading countries are not always being straight forward and or sincere in most of these deals, with so many rights of the host community being stepped upon. Most of these investors are private sectors being funded by

the government, who at the same time is responsible in formulating most of these investment deals where the locals and land owners are not always being properly briefed or carried along. In worse scenarios where the native land owners cannot properly lay legal claims on the land ownership, the government do confiscate such lands as government property or tagged them as "unused lands".

Thus forcing the owners out of their lands, of which most are family inheritance. Sometimes the locals are promised technological transfer, jobs and other forms of compensations but they hardly get any. And such scenarios do often lead to regional unrest, conflicts and confrontations with the local authorities when people become agitated over their rights. But in some fair deals people are negotiated into what is known as Contract farming where the farmland owners are contracted to produce or farm for the occupation. Here a sense of belonging is incorporated with some financial gains and other benefits like technological transfer. Most land acquisitions are not only meant for agricultural expansion as put by Rachel Zedek (2010) but others are for energy source in the case of Europe 10% Biofuel demand declaration of 2010. Joachim Von Braun and Ruth-Meinzen-Dick (2011) also reported of Europe request to harness sunlight energy from North Africa. Borrás, S. Jr., Franco, J.C, Gomez, S. Kay C. and Spoor, M. (2012) also reported that other drives for foreign land acquisition apart from agriculture are energy fuel security ventures, climate change mitigation strategies and demands for newer Hubs of global capital in a research conducted on land grabbing in Latin America and Caribbeans. While population growth was identified by Tichafogwe Tender Renz (2018) as a driver in a research carried out on land grabbing mayhem in Cameroon Douala Metropolitan Local Council Area. While Tura (2018) attributed the problems of land grabs to inadequate legislative protection that induced economic marginalization on the small holder farmers in Ethiopia.

Egolum, & Emoh, (2017) claimed urban development as the cause for land grabbing in developing economy. Moreover, Cotula, L. (2012) submitted that there are more complex set of drivers other than those generally known on land acquisition quest, and of which reflected a fundamental shift in the global

economic and geopolitical relations linking sovereign states, global finance and agric business through to local groups. But in conclusion, Ndi, (2017) finally submitted that rural people should always be incorporated into land acquisition deals, and make rooms for provisions of alternative, benefits and compensation as solutions in a research conducted on local contestation and the struggle for economic gains by the rural people of Nguti village South Western Cameroon. The issue of land grabbing in agriculture is practically unending, and obviously with certain forms of drivers as perceived in the cause for this research work within the identified local communities of Ala, Leguru and Irangu rural farming Communities. The reconstructed Ala-Omu- Ajjah road as opened up the nodal road connecting the three communities as a whole be commercial center given the heavy truck passage that is envisaged to ply the concreted road. As such, Estate Developers are all being attracted to the location, taking large expanse of Cassava farmlands along the road sides away from the owners, for a possible conversion into Estates and other unknown reasons.

The implication if the locals are not sensitized are irreversible land ownership transfer, loss of inheritance, jobs, livelihood, acute food shortage, and an outright denial to certain rights like access to water, fetching firewood and outright loss of heritage such as hunting, fishing and spiritual purposes. These may in turn develop into confrontations and regional conflicts, as the occupation will continue to demand for more space on further needs of the estates for other social amenities. Of which the people may not want to give further consents as a result of revealing consequences. There is no land acquisition deal that is favourable to the locals, they are always at the receiving ends, and there is an urgent need to sensitize them of the risks involvement in giving out their farmlands and source of livelihoods permanently for financial gains. It thus becomes inevitably important not to sit on the fence as concerned agriculturist, and come out to determine the level of awareness of these communities cassava farmers and property land owners to the subject of lands grab in agriculture, together with their possible vulnerability, so that they could be rightly informed and guided to the benefits of all parties in terms of maintenance of identity, heritage, job and food security, and most

importantly agriculture food development at the grassroots..

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The three communities of Ala, Leguru and Irangu were administered well-structured and standardized close-ended questionnaires for data collection. 33 Respondents each were carefully selected from each of the communities with a special focus on the communities Heads, the land owners, the farmers, and those that actually possess landed property along the location and at the road sides of Ala-Omu-Ajjah/Ejinrin axis. The Estate Developer Agents were never contacted for the possibility of their blocking access to reliable information.

On-field personal contacts were made, and Respondents were visited in their houses. A 100 questionnaire papers were structurally and carefully drafted and administered in a form of simple contact interviewing of the randomly selected 33 Respondents from each of the three communities. Data were analysed using a Simple Description Statistics, particularly the measure of Central Tendency, notably Percentage Distribution, Frequency of occurrence and Bar Charts for possible readings, interpretations and results discussion to drive home the conclusions on the research work with possible and eventual recommendations being made.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1-14 show the results obtained from the above study.

Table 1. Age Percentage Frequency Distribution.

| Age | Frequency | % |
|-------|-----------|-----|
| 18-20 | - | - |
| 20-35 | 10 | 10 |
| 35-50 | 10 | 10 |
| 50-65 | 30 | 30 |
| > 65 | 50 | 50 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 2. Sex Percentage Frequency Distribution.

| Sex | Frequency | % |
|--------|-----------|-----|
| Male | 70 | 70 |
| Female | 30 | 30 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 3. Family Size Percentage Frequency Distribution.

| Family Size | Frequency | % |
|-------------|-----------|-----|
| 1-4 | 6 | 6 |
| 5-8 | 90 | 90 |
| 9-12 | 4 | 4 |
| >12 | - | - |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 4. Educational Qualification Percentage Frequency Distribution.

| Educational Qualification | Frequency | % |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Secondary | 49 | 49 |
| NCE | 12 | 12 |
| Technical/Diploma | 06 | 06 |
| Higher Degree | 03 | 03 |
| None | 30 | 30 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 5. Occupation Percentage Frequency Distribution.

| Occupation | Frequency | % |
|--------------|-----------|-----|
| Farming | 40 | 40 |
| Trading | 25 | 25 |
| Draftmanship | 10 | 10 |
| Tradomedical | 05 | 05 |
| Retiree | 20 | 20 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 6. Land Ownership Frequency Distribution.

| Land Ownership | Frequency | % |
|----------------|-----------|-----|
| Yes | 85 | 85 |
| No | 15 | 15 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 7. Land Mode of Acquisition Percentage Frequency Distribution.

| Land Mode of Acquisition | Frequency | % |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Inheritance | 73 | 73 |
| Lease | 08 | 08 |
| Borrow | 04 | 04 |
| Purchase | 15 | 15 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 8. Land Use Type Percentage Frequency Distribution.

| Land Use Type | Frequency | % |
|---------------|-----------|-----|
| Framing | 80 | 80 |
| Residential | 20 | 20 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 9. Land Size Percentage Frequency Distribution.

| Land Size | Frequency | % |
|------------|-----------|-----|
| 1-6 Plots | 40 | 40 |
| 1-5 Plots | 32 | 32 |
| 5-10 Acres | 20 | 20P |
| >10 Acres | 08 | 08 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 10. Crop Type Percentage Frequency Distribution

| Land Size | Frequency | % |
|------------|-----------|-----|
| Cassava | 92 | 92 |
| Other Crop | 08 | 08 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 11. Respondents' familiarity with the research topic Percentage Frequency Distribution.

| Respondents Familiarity | Frequency | % |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Yes | 76 | 76 |
| No | 24 | 24 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 12. Individual Interest to sell landed property Percentage Frequency Distribution.

| Interest | Frequency | % |
|--------------|-----------|-----|
| Yes | 64 | 64 |
| No | 20 | 20 |
| Not Relevant | 16 | 16 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 13. Communities Heads involvement on land transfer deals Percentage Frequency Distribution.

| Communities Heads Involvement | Frequency | % |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Yes | 20 | 20 |
| No | 80 | 80 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Table 14. Respondents' declaration of Interest to accept legal assistance on forceful expulsion Percentage Frequency Distribution.

| Interest | Frequency | % |
|--------------|-----------|-----|
| Yes | 16 | 16 |
| No | 04 | 04 |
| Not Relevant | 80 | 80 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

SOURCE. Field Survey, Oct, 2024.

Discussion

The results shows that 50% of the Respondents are persons above the age of 65 years with majority being male individuals at 70% frequency distribution as shown on Table 2, while the females are 30% of the Respondents population. The Communities have a quite sizeable family size of between 5-8 individuals in a house unit as indicated in Table 3 Level of education is commendable where nearly half of the population have a secondary school "O" Levels certificates at 49%, 12% NCE, and 6% having attended a form of Technical Schools as shown in Table 4. The results rightly predicted and substantiate the claim that the three Communities are a grarian with a sample recorded of 40% farming occupation as against 25% trading, 10% Craftmanship, 5% Tradomedical, and 20% retirees as indicated on Table 5.

Table 6 shows that 85% of the interviewed respondents have landed property and farmlands within their various communities as against those that do not. Most of these lands owner ships are by inheritance at 73% as indicated on table 7. With those that have access to land by leasing were at just 8%, and 4% for those who have borrowed for temporary use, and 15% for those whose ownership are from outright purchased. As a grarian farming communities only a minimal 20% of available land in these communities are utilized for residential purposes with the majority left for farming, predominantly cassava. As shown on Table 8 and table 10 with 92% cassava planting as a major crop production within the area.

Respondents had a 76% agreement of familiarities with the research topic as shown on Table 11, and yet maintain unwavery interest to offer their farmlands for sale to the Estate Developers as shown at 64% on Table 12 with those who still want to keep their land possession being at 20%, and 16% undecided. Table affirmed that the communities Head were not involved in most of these land transaction deals with a recorded 80% Non-involvement. This established that the family members engaged with the investors themselves and they are not ready to show any restraint towards giving out their land for financial gains being reason for their establishment of no interest in legal assistance on the deals. Just a few accepted the offer at 16% nas shown Table 14.

CONCLUSION

The menace of land grab in agriculture will continue to haut the global agricultural communities like a bad plague, particularly within the poorer nations of the world with an unchanging trends of wealthy nation's exploitation of the third world countries. There will be no stooping it, authorities and government of poor Africa nations will continue to swallow the baits of illusive benefits and promises that are always attached to these shady land deals between the host and foreign nation. Large hectares of land space and agriculture farmlands have been irreversible lost by poor nations to foreign and local investors in non-inclusive and profitable land deals that often turn out as exploitations and rights denials. Which as a result, do eventually result in confrontations, agitations and conflicts together with a pocket of litigations.

The recent acquisition of large expanse of cassava farmlands by Estate Developers along the two sides of Ala -Omu -Ajjah/ Ejinrin newly constructed road on the axis of Ala, Leguru and Irangu communities under Odogbolu Local Government Area of Ogun State is perfectly a form of land grab in agriculture regardless of the willingness of the native owners to offer these lands for sale to the Estate Developers (Whose registered names are not mentioned in this paper for legal reasons). In as much as these farmlands are being converted for other use others than farming, then it is detrimental, and a form of agricultural land grab. One can be a little passive here if the land acquisitions are for agricultural enterprise with the initial land owners being engaged in "Contract Framing"

Hence, it is concluded that the land transfer that is being currently witnessed in these geographical research locations are willingly done by the land owners. There were no form of intimidations, oppression or forceful ejection but the people willingly sold out their lands for financial gains, and in the fears that the on-going road reconstruction exercise in the area will expose the location to foreign interest particularly the government who may come around to hijack the lands from the native owners. Some of the Respondents reported that dire economic situation has prompted them to sell off the lands, benefit of which is being used to rebuild dilapidated family property. None of the respondents was willing to disclose the amount of money involved in the transaction or how much per plot or acres the land were sold. Nevertheless,

the development is still perfectly considered as a form of agricultural land grab despite that the respondents boast of still having enough parcel of land space elsewhere to continue to engage in their farming activities.

The people have been enlightened properly on the field the importance of land ownership and the future consequences of irreversible land ownership transfers. They have been advised to show some restraints. And the following recommendation have as well been given: Host community heads and relevant authorities must develop clear policies on foreign land investment, taking into account the overriding interest of the host communities. Foreign and local investors must strictly adhere to relevant host country and community rules and regulation with melted penalties if they fail to comply. It is also recommended that legal assistance be provided to local land owners to ensure that they are not being cheated in land acquisition contracts. The government on the other hand is advised to do more towards assisting the local farmers in rural communities on both financial and technological inputs for a more productive farming operations. And last but not the least, it is advised that land transfer deals that are agriculturally based should have a contract farming deal agreement where the initial land owner are productively engaged as stake holders in the farming operations on the land for both financial and technological transfer benefits..

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