



Land grabbing
in Europe:
Myth or Reality?

Sylvia Kay
Transnational Institute
LandNet Meeting, 5 October 2017, Budapest



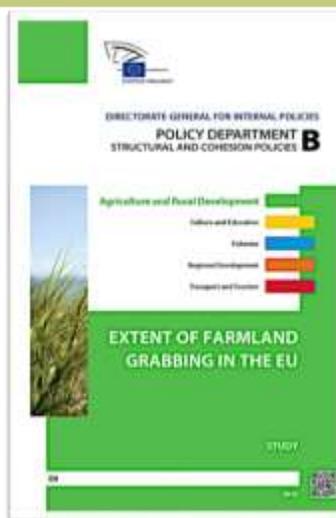
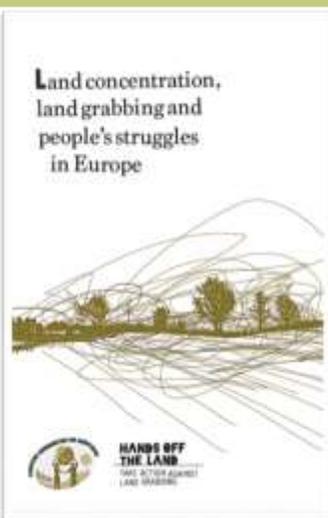
Structure

1. TNI: the way we do research
2. Understanding land grabbing in Europe
3. Key findings
4. Some cases
5. Recommendations
6. Policy changes at EU level: towards a new European model for land governance?

TNI's research

- + TNI is an **international non-profit research and advocacy institute** based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
- + We conduct **research with a mission**:
 - + to build a more peaceful, equitable, democratic and environmentally sustainable international order
 - + to democratise research by engaging in participatory, action-oriented research with a wide variety of partners including civil society organisations, universities, trade unions, policy makers, and social movements.
- + Work on a broad scala of social, political, economic, and ecological issues including issues related to **agrarian and environmental justice**

Insights from two major studies



A short preface

- + **Methodological challenges** in researching land deals in Europe:
 - Lack of transparency and other data-gathering issues around land deals
 - An excessive focus on the 'foreignisation' of land
 - An assumption that Europe is situated outside of the global land grab
 - Contested definitions of land grabbing



Key findings

- Farmland grabbing in the EU is **uneven** and is particularly, though not exclusively, **concentrated in Eastern European MS**.
- Many of these deals involve **new sets of actors not traditionally involved in agriculture** e.g. from the financial sector as well as a rising class of 'land deal brokers'
- The new deals may involve the construction of **large agro-holdings**, some of them of an unprecedented scale.
- Imply an '**extra-economic**' force
- Are problematic because they represent a **deep rupture** with the European model of family farming and the structural goal of a diversified and multifunctional agricultural system

Some cases



Rabo Farm in Romania

In misschien wel het armste dorp van Roemenië verkopen boeren onder druk hun land aan de Rabobank



Als de bank van het dorp EXAMINEERT, maar een boer mogelijk verboden te worden...
...het dorp van het dorp EXAMINEERT, maar een boer mogelijk verboden te worden...
...het dorp van het dorp EXAMINEERT, maar een boer mogelijk verboden te worden...

fi. Home My nieuws Laatste nieuws Print Scan Meer v

ONDERNEMEN Telen Start

Rabobank kocht mogelijk gestolen grond in Roemenië

Van onze redacteur
vrijdag 6 november 2016, 18:36
Update: vrijdag 6 november 2016, 18:40
Foto: iStock / Rabo kocht wellicht gestolen grond

Rabo Farm – een dochter van Rabobank – koopt mogelijk gestolen grond gekocht in Roemenië. Dat is de conclusie van een onderzoek door *De Correspondent* en het Duitse blad *Der Spiegel* in samenwerking met onder meer *The Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism*.

De Correspondent

Pocket contracts and dummy buyers



Green grabbing in Sardinia



Europe without defenses

- + Farmland grabbing – especially when it locks forces with ongoing processes of land concentration – consistently **discriminates against family farming and rural development** in some of the poorest regions of Europe
- + Increasing financialisation of European agriculture **undermines the sustainability** of European farming:
 - + Inflationary pressures on land prices and speculative tendencies
 - + Fragility of large, corporate agricultural enterprises
- + Europe is left without defences:
 - + No early warning system in place e.g. a **European Land Observatory**
 - + Still limited restrictions to the principle of the free movement of capital.

Recommendations

1. Develop a European Land Observatory for monitoring large-scale land deals and land investments.
2. Allow member states to better regulate their land markets according to sound public policy objectives by granting justifiable restrictions to the principle of the free movement of capital
3. Use the most progressive schemes available under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to 'deconcentrate' land and move from a baseline to a best-case scenario
4. Work towards a holistic and human rights based land governance framework in the EU that integrates the social, cultural and ecological as well as economic values of land

Policy innovations at EU level

European Parliament

2014-2019

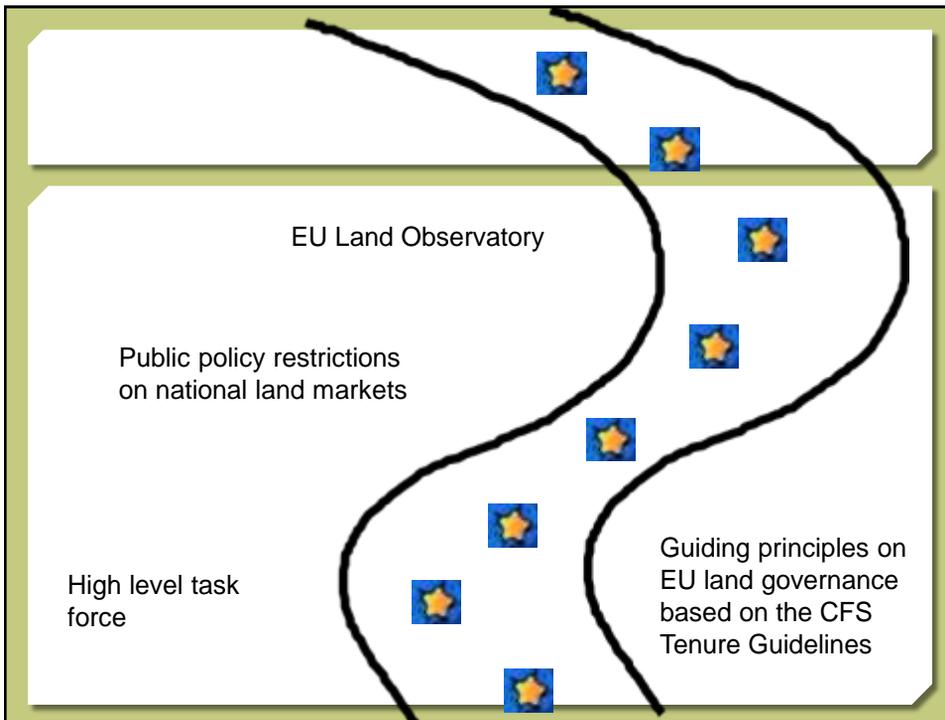
REPORT



on the state of play of farmland concentration in the EU: how to facilitate the access to land for farmers
(2016/2141(INI))

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Rapporteur: Maria Noichl



Conclusions

- + It is time to **move beyond a state of denial**: land grabbing is happening on Europe's home territories, involving European actors and impacting European citizens
- + Land grabbing – when considered against the backdrop of other burning European land issues – should serve as a wake-up call for **a new European model for land governance**.
- + This should include (re)looking at how land consolidation and land banking policies and programmes are carried out.
- + The adoption by public authorities of simple, technical market tools is unable to address the fundamental challenges that farmland grabbing and associated processes raise for European society as a whole.
- + **A more human-rights based, rather than capital-based approach** would pave the way for the a democratic, sustainable and smart land governance that European farmers and citizens deserve.