



Key issues in the context of the LANDNET

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Concept of 'land grabbing'

- ▶ Contested term
- ▶ Here it is 'Capturing of the decision making power over how land is to be used, by whom, for how long, and for what purposes', or
- ▶ Land that is acquired by "extra-economic" forces.
- ▶ When is a land grab not just a normal land transaction?
- ▶ Can it be land grabbing if the land grabbed is small? What if it is by a national?

Does it really apply to Europe?

- New worldwide trends in food production, fuel production and entrance of new investment actors. Critics highlight connection between land grabbing and dispossession or loss of traditional access rights.
- In Europe, farmland loss (UAA) is largely connected to urbanisation (limited) and abandonment (largescale). Also different legal systems and owners in Europe.
- Decision making parties are private rather than public.
- Is Europe similar?

Evidential issues: Case proven?

1. **Wide estimates.** In Romania, Land Matrix has 1.2%, unnamed land experts say 40%.
2. Is it a **NMS problem? Poland has 0.02% foreign ownership.** If size is the issues then Scotland has one owner (from Denmark) with more land than entire the (reported) foreign ownership in Poland.
3. **Is it increasing? Pocket contracts in Hungary?** 0.4m ha in 2008 to estimated 1m in 2013. Threat of criminal action against land sellers and linking ownership to agricultural qualifications might better explain reduction in farm numbers.
4. Apart from Romania, **hard to say that it is a significant and growing issue** in CEE. National law and policy are critical. Scotland versus Denmark.

Does it affect mainly family farmers?

1. Land reform countries have **new class of speculators**, acquiring land with no intention of working, principally interested in income maximization, and would leave land unworked if rents or sale prices were low.
2. **Foreign acquisitions from bankrupt state farms** or struggling privatized collectives. Unlikely they would engage with ownership puzzles of hundreds of small, contested and otherwise absent owners.
3. **Access to farm land not main obstacle for young aspiring farmers** - access to credit, to markets, worries about price and income volatility or simply the size of the plot?
4. **Distinguish between different types of small farms**, for example, semi-subsistence, hobby, and subsistence holdings.

Does land consolidation drive land grabbing?

- “Executive Summary” - “... the multiple drivers of farmland grabbing in the EU including: ... land consolidation programmes in Eastern European Member States...”.
- Land consolidation is about exchange and reallocation. It improves physical structure of land parcels + clears up ownership and other land rights → may activate land market.
- Most LC actions are in areas where farm size is small or very small. Unlikely to support large farm concentration.
- Little connection to “extra-economic” forces or foreign ownership.



Having said that, there are many relevant recommendations in the study

Member States may consider creating a **system of pre-emptive rights**

Member States should support the use **of land sharing (leasing) arrangements and land banks** which support access to land for small, young and aspiring farmers

Development at EU wide level of new data collecting instruments on patterns of land tenure in Europe – creation of a **European Observatory, database on the state of the land in Europe**. Important given the urban bias in EU funded research.

Using the VGGT for improving land governance in the European Union



Discussion session

■ Questions:

- (1) How to define 'land grabbing'? What does it mean to you?
- (2) What problems does it create?

■ Process:

- i. Discuss the questions in your table for 15 min; 1 rapporteur / table
- ii. Write down in paper sheets (indicate countries in the table)
- iii. Harvest in plenary; second person (and subsequents) to talk, refers only to new points, adding to previous speaker
- iv. All paper sheets are collected at the end