Journal of Agriculture and Environment for International Development - JAEID 2017, 111 (1): 75-85
DOI: 10.12895/jaeid.20171.549

Socioeconomic effects of land grab on farming household (HH) heads in Delta Central Agricultural Zone, Delta State, Nigeria

Albert Ukaro Ofuoku and Ezekiel Eromed Oghene

Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Delta State University, Asaba, Nigeria.

Corresponding author: albertofuoku@gmail.com

Submitted on 2016, 16 November; accepted on 2017, 8 June. Section: Research Paper

Abstract: Land grab has been on for more than a decade now. Rural citizens have been reported to have been affected socioeconomically by this new phenomenon that involves European and Asian countries that move to African countries to acquire land for large scale agricultural production, for food, raw materials and biofuel. The study examined socioeconomic effects of land grab on farming household heads in Delta Central Agricultural Zone of Delta State, Nigeria. Ten percent (10%) of identified farming HH heads were involved in the study. Most (50.37%) of the respondents had farms of the sizes of between 0.10 and 1.99ha with a mean farm size of 2.4ha. Their mean farm income was ₦400, 000. Most (84.44%) of them were employed by the agricultural investors after their plots of land were grabbed; 52.59% had fair health status. Sizes of land grabbed from individual farmers ranged between 0.10 and 5.99ha. The lands grabbed were for plantation agricultural, and food crops production. Few of the land deals (24.44%) were sealed with the involvement of the farmers and the investors and the farmers were adequately compensated. Results showed that land grab had negative effects on farming HH heads' socio-economic variables of farm size, farm income, employment status, health status and social status. It was recommended that land deals should involve the investors, government, community leaders and the land holders.

***Keywords**: Land grab, socioeconomic effect, land speculation, multinational investors, farming household heads, land acquisition, land deals.*

Introduction

Land is a precious resource to Africans. According to FAO (2009) estimates, almost 80 percent of the world's undernourished people live in rural areas and mostly depend on agriculture, including livestock, for their livelihoods. Land secures

also the production of food for people not directly involved in agriculture, and is needed for a myriad of other purposes, including infrastructure and human settlements. At the same time, land is a finite resource. Consequently, there are frequent struggles over access to land and conflicts over how land should be used (Willkinson and Rocha, 2009). Conflicts over agricultural land are exacerbated by factors such as environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change (Borras and Franco, 2010). Environmental degradation reduces agricultural land by 5 to 10 million hectares annually and additionally, 19.5 million ha of farmland are converted each year to industrial and real estate use (IFAD, 2004).

Arnold (2005), indicate that most farms are relatively small in developing countries because the average size of farm-land is between half a hectare and a dozen hectare, while the majority of farmers in developing countries are small-scale farmers, the latter do not hold the biggest share of Agriculture land. Instead, a major share of land is in the hands of relatively few landowners. While small-scale farmers use the land to secure their livelihood and engage in subsistence farming, large- scale, high-input, export-oriented, commercial farming is a significant economic sector in many developed countries.

According to GRAIN (2008), small-scale farmers, pastoral societies, forest dwellers and fisher men and women all rely directly on land and natural resources for their livelihood as a primary source of food for their families, and for the innate value their environment often holds as the centre of their cultural identity. Most of the world's poorest countries have lost vast tracks of land through grabbing or leased under long-term deals of domestic and multinational companies and foreign governments looking to secure farmland for commercial agriculture, timber, energy or mining projects, or simply as an asset. Extensive research over the past few years has shown that many of these land deals are characterized by lack of transparency, consultation and adverse human rights effects (Thomas and Markus 2012).

In Nigeria 12 community members have been killed following the forceful seizure of over 2000 hectares of arable land from Ogoni farmers by then governor of Rivers state, Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi. The communal farm lands were handed over to a Mexican company for commercial banana farming, thereby denying local farmers of livelihoods, according to (Chukwudi, 2012). Reduced access to land resources may increase poverty and marginalization, and further inhibit the realization of community and government goals for enhanced standard of living and healthy environment.

It was also reported that government in Delta state gave certificate of occupancy (C-of-O) of 4,000 hectares of farmland to Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) for the High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF) from nucleus farm families in Abraka. To a great extent, this has a negative impact on these farm families who have been surviving on that land through peasant farming (Chukwudi,

2012). There are three main causes behind the strong push for large-scale land acquisition in the developing world: food security, returns on agriculture and biofuel production.

According to estimates (World, Bank 2010), the world population will increase by 40% by 2050, which will require a significant increase in food production to meet the higher demand. In turn, this could require agricultural production in developing countries to double. In many of the countries, concerns over food security are mainly related to limited water resources and arable land, such as in the Gulf States, (Gordillo *et al*., 2000). The food crisis in 2008 further confirmed these worries, when food prices increased to 83% on average within three years and countries with a trade deficit became more aware of their harmful dependency on food import (World, Bank 2010). In addition, with populations growing, moving to urban areas and becoming wealthier, food demand in new emerging economies like India and China can no longer be met by domestic agriculture, (Gordillo *et al*., 2000). Purchasing land to grow crops by resource-rich, yet investment- thirsty countries ensure a steady supply of food for emerging economies' rising agricultural commodity price also attract financial investors and speculators (GRAIN, 2012). After the financial crises of 2008, financial players identified investment in land as a new source of profit to them; land is a "strategic asset" from which they expect to reap high economic returns from adding value to the land through food and fuel crop cultivation (Grassroot International, (2010).

It has been reported by many scholars that most of the large expanse of land are acquired without the consent of the original owners. The land deals are always done between the governments and the foreign investors. The fact that the deals are struck between the government and the foreign investors without the consent and input of the original owners makes the whole process to qualify as land grab. A lot of protests, prompted by dispossession of the rural dwellers of their farm land, were reported by news papers by news papers. Scholars such as Gordillo *et al.* (2000) have also found that the land deals of this nature have adverse effect on farming households dispossessed of their farm land.

In most rural areas, the social-economic effects of land grab on heads of farm families is a rapid deterioration of the rural economy leading to chronic poverty (FAO 2009). In line with this assertion this study was carried out determine the social-economic effects of land grab on head of farm families in Delta Central of Delta State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to present some empirical evidence of the social-economic effect of land grab on farming HH heads in Delta Central Agricultural

Zone of Delta State, Nigeria. The specific objective is to;

i. determine the size of land affected.
ii. ascertain purpose of land-grab in rural community.
iii. examine the procedure followed in the cases.
iv. determine the impacts of land-grab on selected socio-economic characteristics of farm families.

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between land grab and selected socio-economic status of farming household heads in Delta central Agricultural zone.

Methodology

This study covered Delta Central Agricultural Zone of Delta State, Nigeria. Delta State is demarcated into three (3) agricultural zones by the Delta State Agricultural Development Programme (DTADP). These zones are Delta North, Delta Central and Delta South Agricultural Zones. Delta Central consists of ten (10) local government areas. It is under rainforest and fresh water swamp forest vegetation cover, and sandwiched between Delta North and South Agricultural Zones, being the two zones experiencing incidences of land grab.

The people are mainly arable crops and poultry farmers with few other ones who are into plantation agriculture. The plantation farmers cultivate oil palm and rubber majorly. Very few are into cocoa farming.

The population for this study includes HH heads affected by land grab. Purposive sampling technique was used to select local government areas with land grab incidents between 2010 and 2015. The local governments were Sapele, Ethiope East and Ethiope west Local Government Areas. The communities that were affected by land grab were then purposively selected. These communities included Ibada Amukpe in Sapele LGA, Eku and Oria in Ethiope East LGA and Ijenisa in Ethiope West LGA. The farming HH heads affected by land grab in each of the identified villages were identified with the aid of key informants and community leaders. Ten percent (10%) of the identified farming HH heads were randomly selected. This gave a total of 135 respondents who were involved in the study as presented in Table 1.

Primary data were collected with the administration of questionnaire and interview schedule. The questionnaire was administered to the farming HH heads with reasonable level of formal education, while the structured interview schedule was used to obtain responses from the farming HH heads with little or no formal education**.**

The collected were treated to the use of descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and means derived from Likert type scale of strongly agree

Table 1 - Distribution of L.G.As, Communities and respondents.

LGA	Communities	No of farming HH heads	10%
Ethiope East	Eku	344	34
	Oria – Abraka	312	31
Ethiope West	Ijenisa	371	37
Sapele	Ibada – Amukpe	327	31
Total		1354	135

(SA) = 4, Agreed (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and strongly disagree (SD) = 1 with a cut-off score of 2.50. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson product momment correlation.

Results and discussion

Selected socio - economic characteristics of farming household heads

Table 2 indicates that most (50.37%) of the farming HH heads had farm sizes of between 0.10 – 1.99 hectares. This implies that majority of the farming HH heads fell within the category of small holder farmers. The mean farm size was 2.4ha. This is congruent with the findings of Mafimisebi (2011), Saka and Lawal (2009) who found mean farm size of 2.8ha and 2.6ha respectively among farmers in South Western Nigeria. It is of note that farmers in Nigeria are predominantly small scale farmers. Many of them (26.67%) earned farm income of ₦100, 000-100,999 Per annum as very few (2.96%) earned ₦600, 000 and above annually as income. The mean income earned by them was ₦400, 000. It was observed during the survey that the small scale farmers earned lesser income than the medium scale farmers, as expected.

Most (84.44%) of the rural farming HH heads were not self employed as they were found to be working in farms established by agricultural investors. According to Cotula (2011), there where cases subsistence farmers had been encouraged to sell or lease family plots to corporate agricultural investors who later gave them low-wage employments, abandoning their traditional wage earning livelihood. However, many of them still farm on their own farm lands which are located in different locations in the villages. As for their health status, most (52.59%) had fair health status, just as 31.85% had poor health status. Their health status is attributable to the use of pesticides and diversion of water for irrigation by the corporate agricultural investors. Pesticides are known to pollute sources of water and are a threat to human and wild life (Cotula, 2011). Aguilar *et al.* (2010), opine that it accelerates eco-system destruction and the climate change crisis. A little more than half of them (50.37%) had no access to vital

natural resources. These natural resources form part of their sources of livelihood. They are also of health benefit to rural dwellers. The non-timber forest products are of medicinal and food value to the rural dwellers, apart from the craft value they possess. Local streams and rivers form another set of vital natural resources for them. In the study area, however, the local people still have access to these sources of water for consumption and recreation, apart from Eku where one of the streams has been highly polluted.

A majority (81.48%) of the HH heads were not displaced from their residents and therefore were not re-settled. Farming HHs in the study area do not resides on their farms as their farm lands, mostly owned by their extended families are located far away from their settlements. However, few of these farming HHs build camps in their farms and only come to the village on market and festive days and weekends. Ofuoku and Ebewore (2012), found that farmers trek or ride bicycles and motor bikes to their farms, while some built camps there where they stay and work till weekends before they visit their villages.

Table 2 - Selected socioeconomics characteristics of farming HH heads.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Farm size (ha)			
0.10-1.99	68	50.37	
2.00-3.99	39	28.89	2.4ha
4.00-5.99	28	20.74	
Income per annual (#)			
100,000 - 100,999	36	26.67	
200,000 - 200,999	83	24.44	
300,000 - 300,999	27	20.0	₦400,000
400,000 – 400,999	23	17.04	
500,000 – 500,999	12	8.89	
600,000 and above	4	2.96	
Employment Status			
Self employed (farming)	21	15.56	
Not self employed (Agriculture)	114	84.4	
Health Status (self rated)			
Very good	15	11.11	
Good	6	4.44	
Fair	71	52.59	
Social standing			
Access to vital natural resources	67	.63	
No access to vital natural Resources	68	50.37	
Settlement status			
Not settled	110	81.45	
Displaced/resettled	25	18.52	

Size of land grabbed from farming household heads

Plots of farmland measuring 0.10-1.99ha were grabbed from most (53.33%) of the farming HH heads, while plots of the sizes of 2.00-3.99ha from 34.07% and plots measuring 4.00-5.99ha from 12.59% of them (Table 3). Cotula (2011), states that in most societies it is within the mark of modesty to say land is just an asset of both physical and economic value. The attachment of land to social and cultural beliefs, practices and rituals is highly emphasized in many African societies. This encompasses everything ranging from the process of land passage by traditional and customary marriage and inheritance to how it is connected with the peoples' self identity, its purpose and concept in the local religious and spiritual belief system, which include physical site for burial sites.

Table 3 - Sizes of farmlands grabbed from farming Household head.

Land size	Frequency	Percentage%
0.10 – 1.99	72	53.33
2.00 – 3.99	46	34.07
4.00 – 5.99	17	12.59

Many governments in developing countries always expeditiously, offer attractive land sales, leases and incentives to foreign investors, without an insight into how such action will affect local communities and customary law as regards community dwellers' rights to resources of the community and create lack of access to vital resources like water for the local communities (Cotula, 2011).

Purpose of land grab

Plantation agriculture was the major (57.77%) reason for land grab of the two primary production enterprises listed (Table 4). Food and field crops production (42.22%) is another reason land is grabbed from communities. The investors also install their processing facilities (60%) on the land to fully or partially process the produce of the investment exercise.

Table 4 - Purpose for which land was grabbed

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage%
Plantation agriculture	78	51.77
Food and feed crops production	57	42.22
Agro – processing	81	60.0
Manufacturing industry	0	0

Yields from oil palm plantations are processed on site; latex from rubber is partially processed on the plantation. Food and feed crops yields are also either fully or partially processed on the farm. These the investors do in order to reduce production cost.

Procedure followed in the land grab

Most (48.15%) of land deals were transacted by the government and investors (Table 5). Governments rely on land use decree of 1978 to do this. River State government led by Rotimi Amaechi forcefully seized over 2000 hectares of arable farm land from Ogoni farmers and handed same to a Mexican company for commercial banana farming (Chukuwudi, 2012). Some (24.44 %) directly entered into deal with investors and were adequately compensated. This procedure is known to prevent violent reaction from communities. Others (27.41%) were done with the involvement of the investors, government, community and individuals, but without adequate compensation. The inadequacy of compensation given to them is tantamount to under minding the original individual land owners.

Table 5 - Procedure followed by corporate investors.

Procedure	Frequency	Percentage
Investor – government – community individuals (without adequate lease/sale)	37	27.41
Investor – government	65	48.15
Investor – community – individuals (with adequate lease/sale)	0	0
Investor-individuals with adequate lease/sale	33	24.44
Investor-government-community individuals with adequate lease/sale compensation	0	0

Estimation of effect of land grab on selected socioeconomic status of farming household heads

Table 6 indicates thatall the variables were statistically significant, except settlement status. However, they all had negative effects. Farm size had an inverse relationship with land grab (r= -0.67). It implies that one unit increase in land grab incident would lead to one unit decrease in farm size. This is attributable to the fact that in the presence of land grab, farmers were deprived parts of their farmlands. Cotula (2011) points out that even the benefits of direct employment and out grower

programmes prompt financial crisis, thus enhancing poverty level of farm families in the host communities. Wilkinson and Herrera (2010) suggest that farmers are often deprived of their land without adequate compensation in form of either land or money.

Farm income is also found to have an inverse relationship with land grab (r= -0.601). As the farm sizes reduced, farm incomes also reduced as a result of the fact that the land area that accommodated crops had been reduced. GRAIN (2008) observes that most of the world's poorest countries have lost enormous land sizes through land grabbing to domestic and multinational companies and foreign governments.

Table 6 - Estimation of effect of land grab on selected socioeconomic status of farming household heads.

Variable	Land grab	Farm size	Farm income	Employment status	Health status	Social status	Settlement pattern
Land grab	1.000	-0.672*	-0.601*	-0.653*	-0.708*	-0.665*	0.362
Farm size	-0.672*	1.000	-0.631	-0.541	-0.584	-0.562	0.201
Farm income	-0.601*	-0.631*	1.000	-0.584	-0.591	-0.684	-0.261
Employment status	-0.653*	-0.541	-0.584	1.000	-0.472	-0.641	-0.225
Health status	-0.708*	-0.584	-0.591	-0.472	1.000	-0.696	-0.161
Social status	-0.665*	-0.562	-0.684	-0.641	-0.696	1.000	-0.372
Settlement status	0.362	0.201	-0.261	-0.225	-0.161	-0.372	1.000

The inverserelationship between land grab and employment status (r = -0.653) is indicative of the fact that the farming HH heads were no longer self-employed. Most of them had been employed by the investors as large scale agricultural investment workers which might have led to lower income accruing to them. According to Cotula (2011), after losing their family plots to investors, through long – term lease or sale, the farming HH heads are often employed and placed on low – wage.Health status of farming household heads reduced with a unit increase in land grab (r= -0.708). Industrialized farming, which forms the major purpose of land grab, negatively affects the local ecosystems when they are not adequately and efficiently managed. Pesticides used contaminated water resources. The contaminated water adversely affect human and wildlife health (Cotula, 2011).

The social standing of the farmers was negatively affected by land grabbing (r= -0.665) since it also bore negative sign. Land grab is encouraging decreased social

standing. Most times land deals are sealed without taking cognizance of the local communities and customary laws (Oxfam, 2010). This is known to be a form of disregard for community rights over various communal resources and by this they deprive the people or community citizens of free access to critical resources like water.

Conclusion

The overview of these findings has proven that land deals are mainly associated with displacement and resettlement because majority of the farmers were not involved in the land deals, although majority of them were employed, results have shown that medium scale farmers have the highest percentage of employment. Conclusively, majority of land grabbed in Delta Central Agricultural Zone in Delta State was mainly from households (HHs) operatingsmall scale farms. Land grab incidents had negative socio-economic effects on the affected farmers, particularly with regards to farm size, farm income, employment status, health status and social standing.

Based on the afore mentioned, it is recommended that land deals by multinational investors, governments and every other corporate body should be transparent and if possible get the local leaders, household heads whose land are to be traded upon to be fully involved from consultation to execution stage. With this, the word land grad will gradually be extinct.

With reduction in farm size and income, farmers should be encouraged by dissemination of high yielding, improved varieties of crops. In the presence of this, the loss in yield will be ameliorated because of the fact that these improved varieties will increase yield per unit of land.

The wages of these farmers whose employment status has changed should be reviewed upward. This will help to make up for near normal income they got while self-employed.

References

Arnold J.E.M., 2009. Tree components in farming systems, Unasylva, 41(160): 35–42.

Aguilar L., Araujo A., & Quesada-Aguilar A., 2010. Gender and climate change.The World Conservation Unit. https://www.gdnonline.org/resources/IUCN_FactsheetClimateChange.pdf

Borras J., Ian S., and David H., 2011. small scale farmers in increasingly at risk from global land. The Guardian. Co. UK: poverty matters blog London.

Borras S.M and Franco M.J., 2010. Towards a broader view of the politics of global land Grab: Rethinging Land issues, Reframing Resistance, ICAS Working Paper Series no.001.

Chukwudi, "Ogoni and Rivers' politics of land acquisition". Punch. 10 June 2012. http://www.punchng.com/feature/ogoni-and-rivers-politics-of-land-acquisition.

Cotula L., Dyer N. and Vermeulen S., 2009. Fueling expansion: the biofuels boom and poor people's access to land. Rome: FAO/IIED.

Cotula L.(2011) 'Land deals in Africa: What is in the contracts?, London: International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

FAO 2009. Towards Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and Other Natural Resources.Rome: Land Tenure and Management Unit (NRLA), FAO,

Gordillo, G and Platteau, J. P., 2000. Access to land, rural poverty and public action, UN – Wider Studies in Developments Economics Series. New York:Oxford University Press.

GRAIN 2008. Seized: Seized: The 2008 landgrab for food and financial securityhttp://www.grain.org/go/landgrab

GRAIN 2012. World bank report on landgrabbing: Beyond the smoke and mirror. www.grain.org/go/landgrab.

Grassroot International (2010). What is Landgrab?. www.grassrootonline.org.

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). (2008). 'Improving accessto land and tenure security,' IFAD: Rome.

Ofuoku A.U and Ebewore S.O. 2012. Effect of settlement patterns on cassava production in Delta State Nigeria. Global Journal of Science Frontier Research: Agriculture and Biology, 12 (3), 12 – 17.

Oxfam (2010) what is landgrab. Oxfam Research.www.OXFAM.CA/LAND.

Saka J.O. and Lawal B.O., 2009. Determinants of adoption and productivity of improved rice varieties in southwestern Nigeria

Thomas and Markus. 2012. Losing Ground: Forced Evictions and Intimidation in Cambodia. N.p.: Phnom Penh. Web.

Wilkinson J. and Rocha R., (2009). Agro-industry trends, patterns and development impacts. In da Silva, C., Baker, D., Shepherd, A.W., Jenane, C. and Miranda-da-Cruz, S. (eds.), Agroindustries for Development, Wallingford, UK: CABI for FAO and UNIDO, pp. 46-91.

Wilkinson J. and Herrera, S. (2010). Biofuels in Brazil: debates and impacts. Journal of Peasant Studies, 37 (4), 749-768.

World Bank 2010. Rising global interest in farmland. Washington, D.C World Bank

World Bank 2010. Rising global interest in farmland, Washington DC: World Bank.

Zoomers A., 2010. Globalisation and the foreignisation of space: seven processes driving the current global land grab. Journal of Peasant Studies, 37(2); 429–447.