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إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

Land Grab in Kenya: Risks and Opportunities

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Abstract

Over the past two years, the phenomenon of land grab has captured not only the media attention but also civil society groups as a growing trend in sub-Saharan Africa. The phenomenon involves large-scale land acquisition – be it purchase or lease – for agricultural production by foreign investor or country. While, land grab transactions are highly opaque and controversial, in Kenya, a number of land grabs have been reported. In 2004, Dominion Farms Limited was leased about 2,300 hectares within the fertile River Yala Swamp to grow rice. Six years after, the government secured a loan of US\$ 2.5 Billion in exchange for 40, 000 hectares prime agricultural land in Tana River Delta. It is also in public knowledge that the Japanese, Belgian, and Canadian companies are eying up to 500,000 hectares for biofuels production. These land deals and their social and economic impacts for rural people remains little understood. This paper examines the drivers of this large-scale land acquisition, and the social and economic impacts on the rural poor. The paper relies on extensive review of available literature, preliminary works done by NGOs and International Organizations and agencies.

Key Words: Kenya, Land Grab, social and economic impacts