

Chapter 12

An Interpretation of Large-Scale Land Deals Using Boserup's Theories of Agricultural Intensification, Gender and Rural Development

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12.1 Introduction

Ester Boserup challenged mid-twentieth century ideas about rural livelihoods and economic development. Boserup's publications, along with other factors, initiated a re-conceptualisation of the processes associated with agricultural innovation, the transition to modernity and the importance of gender perspectives to rural development. Though considerable time has passed since Boserup's early writings, her theoretical viewpoint continues to feature prominently in contemporary discussions of rural development (see Abernethy 2005; Decker and Reuveny 2005; Demont et al. 2007; Hunt 2000). Equally impressive is the fact that her work has remained central to a variety of disciplines ranging from economics to anthropology to the biophysical sciences. However, the global context has changed dramatically since Boserup's publications first gained prominence. An entirely new set of technologies—ranging from new crop varieties to mobile phones—has been developed and disseminated throughout the world. Urbanisation has continued at an unprecedented pace on almost every continent. In addition, the emergence of new stakeholders—including civil society organisations, private sector organisations and international organisations—and an ever-changing and increasingly interconnected geopolitical climate have implications for the lives of the rural poor. Given these changes, it is worth examining the applicability of Boserup's writings in a twenty-first century context.

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This chapter focuses on the contemporary debate surrounding large-scale land deals (also called “land grabs”), an issue that is at the intersection of two themes central to Boserup’s oeuvre, specifically her work on agricultural intensification and her work on gender and rural development. In this chapter, Boserup’s theories of agricultural intensification and of gender in rural development are used to shed light on aspects of large-scale land deals that have thus far received scant attention. The chapter begins with a brief summary of Boserup’s views on agricultural intensification and of her work on gender in rural development, followed by background information on the contemporary wave of large-scale land deals. Large-scale land deals are then presented as a contemporary example of intensification, leading to a discussion of which aspects of Boserup’s theory remain relevant and which are problematic in the present-day context. Boserup’s work on gender is then discussed in the context of large-scale land deals to highlight the necessity of including gender in any discussion of land acquisition.

12.2 Boserup on Agricultural Intensification

The concept of agricultural intensification, which became central to Boserup’s understanding of economic development in rural areas, was discussed in her groundbreaking 1965 publication, *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth*. In this book, Boserup takes as her starting point the relationship between population growth and food supply, writing the following:

Ever since economists have taken an interest in the secular trends of human societies, they have had to face the problem of the interrelationship between population growth and food production. There are two fundamentally different ways of approaching this problem. On the one hand, we may want to know how changes in agricultural conditions affect the demographic situation. And, conversely, one may inquire about the effects of population change upon agriculture. (Boserup 1965, p. 11)

Contrary to the dominant Malthusian ideas of the time, Boserup argued that population growth stimulates agricultural development via innovation and productivity improvements, rather than vice versa. To arrive at this central argument, Boserup disputed the dominant theories of how to increase agricultural output. The conventional logic at the time held that agricultural output could be increased through either expansion into new uncultivated areas or through the initiation of more intensive cultivation. Boserup made a persuasive case that “primitive” agriculture—similar to that which continued to exist in much of the developing world—does not function in this way.¹ Primitive agricultural systems do not use permanent fields. Rather, cultivation shifts from plot to plot with an intervening fallow period to give the land time to recover and to regenerate depleted soil nutrients. Thus, from Boserup’s perspective, discussions of agricultural development in rural societies should focus on the frequency of cropping rather than whether land is cultivated.

¹ Boserup used the term “primitive agriculture” in her early texts to refer to agriculture before intensification; however, she refrained from using this terminology in her later writing.

By introducing the frequency of cropping as a measure of agricultural intensity, Boserup was able to distinguish five types of land use: forest-fallow, bush-fallow, short-fallow, annual cropping and multi-cropping. According to Boserup, the gradual transition from extensive (i.e., forest-fallow) to intensive (i.e., multi-cropping) land use is roughly characteristic of the sequence of agricultural development through history. As such, this transition is characterised by decreasing fallow periods and increasing levels of agricultural intensity. As fallow periods shorten, new technologies and methods to improve the productivity of the land must be developed to maintain the land's fertility. At the same time, the introduction of new methods requires additional human labour, and a household must work harder to maintain yields that are comparable to those of the past. Ultimately, Boserup argued that intensification takes place when population pressure is sufficiently large precisely because the new technologies require an additional investment of labour such that a population increase is necessary. Boserup also identified many secondary effects of intensification, which may ultimately lead to an overall growth in agriculture. These secondary effects include new work ethics and patterns of labour, new divisions of labour, and the spread of urbanisation, education and communication.

In addition to this work on intensification and innovation, another major contribution from Boserup was to draw attention to the gender dynamics of rural development. While other authors at the time had development models that were largely gender blind, Boserup highlighted the fact that rural men and women have different tasks and responsibilities and are affected differently by the processes associated with intensification. In her 1970 book, *Woman's Role in Economic Development*, Boserup drew explicit attention to the gendered division of labour in both "traditional" and "modern" agricultural systems and to the fact that—for better or worse—men and women experience the transition to modernity in different ways. Boserup was an early critic of the notion that gender differences in the labour market were due to biological, as opposed to socially constructed, differences. She went on to argue that economic development could not be fully evaluated without recognising women's myriad "hidden contributions", particularly in the form of unpaid work. In this and other publications, Boserup illuminated the complexity of women's work, a topic that had traditionally been downplayed or ignored. Boserup is credited with ushering in a new era of discussion of "women in development" and subsequently "gender and development."

12.3 Background on Large-Scale Land Deals

Many of the issues Boserup raised related to subsistence agriculture and intensification are still relevant to studies of rural development today. However, a host of additional issues that are related, yet new in their own right, has also arisen. One such issue are large-scale land deals that have sparked ongoing controversy among development practitioners and researchers, national governments, the international investment community, and civil society organisations at both national and international levels (GRAIN 2008; United Nations 2010; World Bank 2010). In Madagascar, public uproar over a decision to lease a large amount of land to a Korean company

contributed to the collapse of the Ravalomanana administration in 2009. In a variety of other places around the world—including Uganda, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, and the Philippines—national protests have made large-scale land deals a subject of heated debate.

Simply put, the current wave of large-scale land deals is characterised by the widespread acquisition of land in developing countries by foreign or domestic investors for a variety of purposes including speculation, investment and the production of staple crops or biofuels—often for export. This land is acquired in a variety of modes including purchase, rental and contract farming arrangements. It is difficult to succinctly define what qualifies as a large-scale land deal given the deals' considerable diversity in scale and context. For example, a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) suggests that these deals range from 10,000 to 500,000 ha and take place in a wide range of countries including Uganda, Brazil, Cambodia, Sudan, Pakistan, and Ukraine (FAO 2009). A report by the International Land Coalition (Anseeuw et al. 2012) considered reported deals of 200 ha or more and found deals totalling 203 million ha worldwide reported as approved or under negotiation, of which 71 million ha were part of verified deals. Africa was a particular focus of these deals, accounting for 134 million ha of reported and 34 million ha of verified deals.

Foreign investment in land is not a new phenomenon. During the colonial eras of many developing countries, it was common for colonisers to expropriate customary land and establish large estates dedicated to the production of export crops. In many instances, foreign-owned estates continued to operate even after the countries gained independence. Agricultural commercialisation—often the purported rationale for land deals—has also taken place at a variety of scales, ranging from smallholder farms to plantations owned by foreigners or national elites. However, a number of distinct drivers distinguish the contemporary wave of large-scale land deals from earlier foreign investment in land. The development of and subsequent interest in biofuels as a substitute for oil led governments from the United States and Europe to look for land available for biofuel production and exportation. An unprecedented conglomeration of factors—including urbanisation, population growth, the 2008 global food price crisis and the increasing difficulty of increasing yields in industrialised countries—drove investors from oil-rich Gulf States and wealthy Asian countries with little arable land to seek new locations for the production of staple crops to export to their home countries.² The concurrent financial crisis prompted the international investment community to seek new, “safer” investment opportunities in land speculation in developing countries. The magnitude of the current wave of land deals is unprecedented. A World Bank (2010) study of 464 projects found land deals

² We recognise that urbanisation and population growth are not new phenomena. However, we argue that the recent combination of urbanisation and population growth at unprecedented rates in newly industrialised countries, coupled with the food price crisis and decreasing yields, has been unique and without historical precedent. Likewise, the record shortages of staple crops that have resulted from this conglomeration of factors have also been without precedent.

accounting for 46.6 million ha reported in 203 projects in 81 countries, with information on land area unavailable for the rest. Proponents of large-scale land deals argue that these deals are a source of much-needed investment in agriculture and can introduce technologies that increase productivity, especially on “unused” land. Critics argue that investment in land is no longer about gaining a comparative advantage in global markets but rather about providing food and energy to wealthier countries using the land and water of the poor (GRAIN 2008; United Nations 2010).

12.4 Large-Scale Land Deals as a Contemporary Example of Agricultural Intensification

Arguably, large-scale acquisitions of land by foreign and domestic investors in developing countries are a contemporary example of agricultural intensification, albeit in a different manner than the intensification first analysed by Boserup. At the heart of large-scale land deals is an attempt to make the land more productive through high inputs of capital, new technologies, labour, and agrochemicals. This push for intensification is prompted by investors, who are typically under pressure to make the land productive as quickly as possible—usually within a 10-year period—to maximise profit. Thus, the large-scale land deal is a nuanced inversion of Boserup’s own theory, as in this case, exogenous pressures to feed or fuel distant consumers—rather than endogenous pressures to feed a local population—lead to agricultural intensification. In other words, the *external* growth of biomass demand is inducing agricultural intensification in the countries where the land deals are located.

Large-scale land deals also differ from Boserup’s original model of intensification with respect to the timing of the intensification. The endogenously induced intensification Boserup describes transpires organically—and by implication, slowly—as the population expands over generations. However, in the case of exogenously induced intensification as represented by large-scale land deals, intensification occurs rapidly, in some cases in periods as short as a few years. Entire stages of intensification may be skipped in the leap from extensive agriculture to mechanisation. Boserup’s ideas about mechanisation and labour inputs also differ from the large-scale land deal example. Boserup argued that population increases allow for increased investment in labour and overall increases in yields. However, a byproduct of this development is decreased labour productivity. In contrast, industrialised agriculture was able to increase yields significantly while simultaneously decreasing labour inputs. Given that Boserup focused on pre-industrial agriculture, this point does not fundamentally contradict her argument; however, it does constitute an important consideration.

Another major departure from Boserup’s intensification scenario is with regard to land tenure changes. Boserup (1965) described the gradual transformation of land tenure during the process of intensification, moving from generalised rights of cultivation and grazing for all members of a clan or family to permanent attachments to particular pieces of land to private property, with property rights becoming more defined. However, throughout the process she described, the original land users had collective or individual exclusion rights, and outsiders who were seeking to use the

land had to pay tribute to the original cultivators. Outsiders seeking to acquire land today, however, are generally not entering as supplicants asking the local authorities for permission to use a piece of land; rather, they are often much more wealthy and powerful, bypassing local authorities entirely and negotiating with central governments for land rights. In these contexts, customary land rights in particular may be ignored. There is also often a compressed land tenure formalisation process, with those acquiring the land securing it through formal title or long-term leases, which were often unavailable or unaffordable to the prior right-holders.

While the debate over large-scale land deals may appear to present a challenge to Boserup's theory of land intensification, in many respects, Boserup's work provides a means for critically examining these land deals. Within the development research and policy community, there is a line of discourse promoting the idea that large-scale land deals—or “agricultural investments”—are good for the rural poor because the intensification they bring is needed to promote rural economic growth. Using Boserup's lens to look at large-scale land deals makes it clear that the intensification these deals bring is different from the “natural” endogenous intensification described by Boserup in both nature and time-frame. It remains unclear whether local populations have the capacity to cope with these land deals and to benefit from the intensification that accompanies them.

12.5 Boserup, Gender and the Large-Scale Land Deal Debate

Boserup's work on gender in rural development brought to light the importance of considering how men and women are affected differently throughout intensification and other rural development processes. In *Woman's Role in Economic Development*, her groundbreaking 1970 book on the topic, Boserup contested the notion that women made little or no economic contribution at the household or national levels. On the contrary, she showed how women's paid and unpaid labour positively contributed to household income and national economic growth. Boserup was one of the first to advocate the need to document and understand women's time use and labour burdens, including the amount of time spent on domestic tasks such as cooking, childcare and the collection of water, fuel and fodder. Boserup challenged researchers and practitioners to think about the ways in which development processes affected men and women differently and in turn the different but important ways in which men and women contributed to economic development at the micro and macro levels.

Since Boserup first wrote on this subject, researchers have embraced the idea that intra-household resource allocation must be understood to make sense of development processes (Alderman et al. 1995). Sex-disaggregated time-use data have also been recognised as essential to understanding the gender dimensions of economic development. Following in the footsteps of Boserup, researchers have empirically documented the contributions that women make to household welfare and poverty reduction at the micro and macro levels. Increasing women's control over assets—such as land, physical assets, and financial assets—has been shown to improve child health and nutrition and increase allocations toward education (Quisumbing 2003;

World Bank 2001). In Bangladesh, for example, a higher share of assets controlled by women is associated with better health outcomes for girls (Hallman 2000). Research by the International Food Policy Research Institute found that equalising women's status would lower child malnutrition by 13 % (13.4 million children) in South Asia and 3 % (1.7 million children) in Sub-Saharan Africa (Smith et al. 2003).³ Empirical work from around the world now supports Boserup's idea that increasing the resources controlled by women promotes agricultural productivity (Quisumbing 1996; Saito et al. 1994; Udry et al. 1995) and contributes to poverty reduction (World Bank 2001).

Given the body of work on the gender dimensions of economic development that has followed Boserup's early writings, it is evident that including a gender perspective is critical when looking at the implications of large-scale land deals. Women and men have different responsibilities, rights, and opportunities and will be differently affected by changes in labour opportunities and tenurial regimes, especially for land transfers to extralocal investors. Land deals that take resources away from women can reduce the welfare of women and their families, even if there are some income gains for men. Thus, considering gender is not only a matter of social equity but is also central to poverty reduction. Nevertheless, the initial discussions and debate around large-scale land deals were characterised by few references to, and limited discussions of, gender (Cotula et al. 2009; De Schutter 2009; Germany 2009; World Bank 2010). Since these first discussions, many in-progress case studies and a few larger empirical projects have been launched. In addition, a theoretical framework that incorporates gender has been developed (Behrman et al. 2012; Daley 2010). The following is a rough chronology of the processes related to large-scale land addresses a discussion that builds on the thinking of Boserup and the framework developed by Behrman, Meinzen-Dick and Quisumbing (2012) to establish the gender implications of these dominant trends. The discussion emphasises the importance of understanding the gender dimensions of large-scale land deals.

12.6 Integrating Gender into the Large-Scale Land Deal Debate

Before any acquisition, it is important to understand who in the community has formal or informal land ownership or use rights and how gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, and other distinguishing factors may influence these rights. Poor rural women are disadvantaged with respect to land access and ownership in both customary and formal titled systems, even before a deal (Agarwal 1994; Kevane 2004; Lastarria-Cornhiel 1997). In contexts where customary land tenure dominates—such as Sub-Saharan Africa—most women gain access to land only through a husband or male family member. In contexts where formal titles are common—such as Latin

³ The study defines women's status as women's power relative to men. Thus, women with low status typically have less control over household resources, tighter time constraints, less access to information and health services, poorer mental health, and lower self-esteem.

America—few women hold titles and even fewer own large-scale enterprises. These existing gender disparities in land access and ownership will likely be exacerbated by land deals. In contexts where titling is prevalent, if the land is titled in the name of the male head of household, women may not have a say regarding its sale or lease, even if the land was jointly acquired or the woman uses some portion of the land for productive purposes (Peters 2010). In contexts where customary land rights dominate, there is evidence that privatisation concentrates land in the hands of those who can assert ownership, such as community leaders and male heads of household, often to the detriment of the access and use rights of poor rural women and ethnic minorities (Lastarria-Cornhiel 1997). In addition, common land that women depend on for collecting firewood, water, fodder, and medicinal plants often has the least secure tenure, even being designated as “wasteland” by governments and is therefore the most likely to be opened up to outside investment (Rossi and Lambrou 2008).

Land acquisition for large-scale land deals is typically initiated through a process of consultation and negotiation that ultimately leads to a contract that formally enunciates the terms of the deal. The diversity in how this process plays out and the extent to which the perspectives of local populations are taken into account has important implications for local men and women. During formal and informal consultations and negotiations, men and women may not be equally represented due to legal or social restrictions. For example, in a case study of oil palm plantations in Indonesia, the companies coming into the district to establish palm oil plantations often reinforced or even exacerbated existing patriarchal norms and gender disparities by relying solely on male community leaders to help sign up smallholder farmers, disseminate information, and resolve conflicts (Julia and White 2010). Women were left out of initial community consultations precisely because they did not have visible positions in community leadership.

Under Boserup’s model, gender tasks and responsibilities evolve during the endogenous pattern of intensification. However, Boserup also predicted that the shift from hoe to plough cultivation—in other words, the process of agricultural intensification—would decrease women’s involvement in agriculture because ploughing was perceived almost universally as a male task due to the intense physical labour required. At the same time, weeding, a “female task,” would become less important with intensification, pushing women further out of agriculture. In the case of large-scale land deals, ideas about appropriate “male tasks” and “female tasks” may likewise shape employment prospects for the local population. In the production of high-value crops and biofuels, as well as for other types of commercial agriculture, there is also a trend toward the gendering of tasks: women are perceived as more nimble and assigned tasks such as pruning, spraying, thinning, and tying, and are thereby excluded from activities that may be better paid, less strenuous, or less dangerous (Barrientos et al. 1999; Dolan and Sorby 2003; Rath 2003; Torres 1997). In some contexts, it is assumed—by investors or local communities or both—that formal-sector jobs are largely or exclusively for men. Many communities—especially rural ones, where resources are limited—have a history of prioritising boys’ education over girls’, resulting in potential gender disparities in human capital (Klasen 2002). These disparities may influence the ability of men and women to take advantage

of new employment opportunities by relegating women to lower-skilled positions. Women workers also have the added burden of balancing childcare alongside paid work duties, particularly when employers do not provide adequate childcare facilities. In some instances, rather than drawing from the local population to build the labour force needed to run large-scale farms, investors may decide to import their own workers from their home countries to fill lower level or managerial positions. This can be damaging for local men and women who will likely be relegated to peripheral jobs or excluded entirely from large-scale farm employment.

The introduction of mechanised production may be a mixed blessing for *both* local men and women. As Boserup noted, “Obviously, the adoption of a farming system where the main farming equipment is operated only by males entails a tremendous change in the economic and social relationship between the sexes” (Boserup 1970, p. 21). While exclusive reliance on mechanised methods can limit employment opportunities, some mixed labour and mechanised systems can help women by eliminating the most physically strenuous part of the process (Dolan and Sorby 2003). Ultimately, whether men and women benefit from mechanisation and other new technologies depends on whether there are concurrent increases in the demand for labour, the opportunities for application of the technologies outside the realm of the investment project, and the targeting of the technologies.

An alternative to establishing a large-scale farm is for the investor to enter a contract farming agreement with the local farmers. Under a contract farming agreement, the farmer agrees to provide a given quantity and quality of a product within a specified timeframe, and the investor agrees to either purchase the harvest at a set price or to provide a fixed percentage of the harvest to the farmer as rent. Contract farming is often presented as a more equitable option for smallholder farmers because it allows them to retain control over their land and labour and thereby benefit from returns to land as well as labour. However, the gender equitability of contract farming arrangements depends on a variety of factors including who in the household will receive compensation for the contracted production and whose crops will be displaced by the new production. In some instances, investors make the contract only with the male head of household, although many male and female family members will provide the labour (Raynolds 2002). There is also evidence of men in contract farming systems taking over women’s crops as these crops become more profitable (Dolan and Sutherland 2002). On the other hand, when investors target female participants, provide training and input to female farmers and promote enterprises appropriate for women, contract farming can be profitable for female farmers (Bangwe and Van Koppen 2010).

For both large-scale and contract farming systems, the environmental impacts of the deals on local men and women must be considered. The use of agrochemicals releases pollutants that may reduce local soil and water quality. Monocropping crowds out biodiversity, including wild plants used by locals for food or medicine. Furthermore, if the investment crop is irrigated, the demand for water needed to sustain the large-scale agricultural production of staple crops or biofuels will likely compete with the quantity of water required for food production, livestock, and domestic consumption. Women, whose domestic chores typically include the collection of

water, fuel, and fodder, may experience the environmental impacts most directly. In addition, the use of new technologies such as pesticides may have serious health effects on the local community, particularly if proper protection and cleaning methods are not adopted. Evidence indicates that commercial endeavours often do not provide workers, especially women workers, with adequate protective gear or proper training for agrochemicals, and there is little monitoring of the effects on worker health, particularly women's reproductive health (Barron and Rello 2000; Dolan and Sutherland 2002; Loewenson 2000; Oxfam 2007).

Another issue for consideration is the type of crops that will be planted on the land in question and how the produce will be divided between home consumption, local markets, and exports. Under many land deals, staple crops—such as rice, maize, and millet—are planted for export to investor countries that lack the land and water required for domestic production. In some contexts, all of the produce is exported to the investor's country, which can be detrimental to local food security, particularly if the labour of the local population is diverted from subsistence farming to wage labour. In some cases, a portion of the produce may be sold at local markets or given to local labourers. In other cases—particularly, though not exclusively, in contract farming—local residents hired as labourers may retain a percentage of the crop yield as rent or payment for labour. The availability of staple crops, along with crops rich in important nutrients and vitamins, is particularly important to women, who are the guardians of household food security. An alternative to the production of staple crops is the production of biofuels, including bioethanol and biodiesel, which are increasingly produced in developing countries and sold on the global market as an alternative to fossil fuels. Exclusive biofuel production can be detrimental to local food security, because land and water are diverted from food production to biofuel production, while land available for livestock grazing may also be given over to biofuel production (UN Energy 2007). Biofuel production may contribute to the socioeconomic marginalisation of women because so-called "marginal lands"—often the domain of women—are often used to produce biofuels.

As part of land deals, investors often provide ancillary services, for example, investment in infrastructure, hospitals, educational facilities, stores and so on. Targeted investments in non-agricultural infrastructure, such as the construction of roads, rail links or port facilities, are mutually beneficial to investors looking to improve supply chains and to members of the local population with existing social and financial mobility. Some investors also invest in primary schools, hospitals, clinics or other local public amenities that are beneficial to local populations. Investments of this type may be of particular benefit to women of reproductive age and women who oversee the education and healthcare of their children. However, company stores can be a source of indebtedness and thus perpetuate cycles of poverty unless the terms of trade and credit are favourable.

12.7 Conclusions

Ester Boserup's explanation of agricultural intensification as an endogenous process has influenced a generation of agricultural development specialists. However, the large-scale land deals of recent years provide a different model of intensification. These land deals are much more rapid and are characterised not by endogenous local changes as Boserup predicted, but by external influences from global actors. Contrary to Boserup's argument, intensification does not bring decreasing labour productivity as a result of the mechanisation of agriculture. Given the rapid pace and exogenous nature of these land deals, both land tenure and gender-specific tasks and responsibilities may become confused or distorted, with negative implications for women. This does not mean that endogenous intensification is necessarily good for women, particularly if non-farm employment does not adequately grow and absorb women. However, the contemporary wave of large-scale land deals is different in that the intensification is so rapid that local economies may not be able to adapt and create alternative employment opportunities for local women and men who are displaced from agriculture or their land.

Properly executed large-scale land deals that give appropriate attention to gender can provide opportunities for both women and men through the introduction of new employment and income opportunities, new technologies, and new services. Appropriately designed land deals may even increase the gender equitability of the distribution of local resources. Investors also stand to benefit from land deals that take into account the full range of skills, labour potential, and knowledge of local women and men. However, if land deals fail to address the local context and gender dimensions, investments will at best perpetuate existing gender inequality and at worst increase poverty and conflict. Investors will lose out if their plan ignores the labour potential of half the population or causes community unrest. Large-scale land deals are not isolated events, but are linked to many interrelated policies, including land reform and certification, agricultural investment, and trade policy, as well as legislation to promote gender equality, attract investors, and regulate investments.

Appropriate programs and policies that consider gender from the start can help ensure that the intensification resulting from large-scale land deals is gender equitable. For example,

- Land reform and certification can help secure existing users' land rights and thereby ensure that both women and men benefit from the land's sale or lease. Including the names (and photos) of both husband and wife can help to secure the land against expropriation by one spouse.
- Agricultural research and infrastructure investments in developing countries, coupled with private investment to improve input supply, processing, and marketing, can increase the productivity of existing male and female land users without requiring that they surrender their land to outside investors.
- Countries can ensure that trade and investment policies, which affect the profitability of land deals and the incentives for foreign investors to acquire land as a tool for obtaining food, are not biased against existing local male and female producers.

- Legislation to promote gender equality—for example, in cases of inheritance or in the actions of local governments—can strengthen women’s voices and bargaining power, making government services such as extension and land registration more gender equitable.

The challenges are to assess how the existing policy framework surrounds agricultural development and influences land deals; to assess how gender can become an integral part of the framework, rather than an afterthought; and finally, to enact changes that support gender-equitable agricultural development in programs, policies and institutions.

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