

Land Grab in Tanzania: whose responsibility?

The panel discussion on land grab in Tanzania was organised on the occasion of the impact study of Fair Politics: *"Fuelling Poverty or Progress? The EU and Biofuels in Tanzania"*. This study assessed the impacts of the European biofuels policy in Tanzania and concluded that land grab in Tanzania is a big issue related to biofuels investment.

Three experts shed their light on this issue. Firstly, Yefred Myenzi (director of Haki Ardhi Land Rights Research and Resources Institute) from Tanzania, secondly Monique van Zijl (policy adviser Economic Justice for Oxfam Novib) and thirdly Jasper van Teeffelen (researcher Fair Politics of the impact study). They explained different aspects of the local situation in Tanzania and focused on land grab as a result of European corporate investments.

Land Grab

First, Monique van Zijl introduced 'Land Grab' in general. She pointed out that land grab is a critical issue. Since 2008 investments in land have increased due to food and energy crises. 75% of these land investments are in development countries which score low on democracy and implementation of rights. *"What is legal and what is correct is not always the same thing"*. Van Zijl made a distinction between good land investment and bad land investment. The latter (also referred to as 'land grab') entail investment without consent of the local population, which results in displacement and dispossession of homes. Statistically, the main players in acquisitions of farms are from the United States (US), European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom (UK). The role of the Netherlands (NL) is difficult to assess due to lack of transparency among the private sector, which has no obligation to report. However, the Financial World in NL has large investments in multinational companies that in turn invest in land.

Yefred Myenzi explained the role of Haki Ardhi-Land Rights Research Resources Institute in relation to land grabs in Tanzania. He explained there are five reasons to transfer land in Tanzania: for biofuels, agribusiness (for food export), forests (in order to sell 'carbon'), tourism and mining. The consequences of these 'land transfers' for the local communities are loss of access to water and resources, even if people don't live on the land that is transferred. For instance, 'idle land' can still be meaningful for communities when it gives them access to water. Next, problems occur when companies that invest in land do not keep their promises towards the local population. Haki Ardhi advocates for communities that are affected by land grabs. It organises public dialogues in which they bring the voices of the farmers to the public area and advocates for the rights of communities in the parliament.

The role of the EU

Jasper van Teeffelen, who researched the impacts of the EU biofuels policy in Tanzania, told the story he encountered in Tanzania during his research. He explained that he did this impact study because Fair Politics advocates for policy coherence for development of the EU. The EU introduced a 10% target for renewable energy in the transport sector, to be achieved by 2020. Biofuels are almost entirely responsible for progress towards this target.

Van Teeffelen explained that Tanzania encountered a rush for biofuels since 2005. At first, the Tanzanian government embraced the biofuels investments because they could use it for own

development. However, biofuel production is mainly for the European market (export) where there is a demand for biofuels due to the EU biofuels policy. Next, the companies that come to invest are not common with development countries and how to invest there. After all, the local population does not benefit because the biofuels are for export and many investment companies go bankrupt due to the experimental nature of biofuels investment, and therefore cannot keep their promises to the local communities that gave away their land. The impact study recommends the EU to get rid of targets for food-based biofuels and introduce social sustainability criteria on biofuels imports, taking into account the land rights of affected communities and food security.

The role of Tanzania

Among the audience, the role of the local government in land grabs was discussed. According to one person, we cannot blame the EU on land grab in Africa because it is a matter of 'leadership stupid' in Africa, thereby referring to corruption. *"Don't blame the one who is offering the price; you blame the one who is taking it"*.

The panellists did not agree. According to Yefred Myenzi, there is a value of shared responsibility. *"Do you capitalize on a weak government?"* He argues that the EU has an obligation to put in place strong mechanisms that monitor operations of companies. Monique van Zijl also has a problem with the idea to blame the 'taker' and the assumption that there is a free market and the local governments have full control over investments. She also points out the role of the Aid Agenda. For example, the World Bank promotes free trade which makes it easy to transfer land. Van Zijl thinks we should ask ourselves what we can do at home. We should look at coherence and transparency of policies and practices within the NL and EU borders.

Next, there were concerns about the way the impact study is implemented. The questioner wondered who has been involved from the Tanzanian side and why the study is not published nor debated in Tanzania. Van Teeffelen replied he conducted the research by speaking to many different actors in Tanzania, such as local farmers, ministries and organisations like Haki Ardhi. He admitted that some impacts should be addressed on the ground but that we cannot ignore the role of the EU (and its incoherence with development goals). Since this impact study concerns the role of the EU biofuels policy on Tanzania it is presented in the EU.

Finally, some questions were about the Haki Ardhi organisation and its relationship with the Tanzanian government. Myenzi explained that the organisation involves a range of different members, from pastoralists to elites, and that the relationship with the government depends on the agenda of the government. The organisation refuses to be part of the government in order to remain independence but would like to get involved in the reform processes of rights.