

“Water, energy, land and food security. The challenge of large-scale land acquisitions”

The aim of this concept note is to present the project of organizing a series of seminars to be held in Venice over the period October 2014-January 2015.

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Endorsed by: Comitato Venezia Expò, Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (INEA), Fondazione ENEL

Rationale

The need to ensure the sustainability of food and energy provision for a rising population is the main theme addressed by the forthcoming Expò to be held in Milan in 2015. The increasing pace and dynamics of land acquisitions and the implicit appropriation of water resources poses major challenges to water, food and energy security. In this context, the proposed workshop aims to explore the main drivers and implications of land transactions around the world, with a particular focus on developing countries. Europe, and Italy particular, plays a major role as an investor in foreign land, which has been raising major concerns about the claimed sustainability of EU energy and food policies and targets. The proposed workshop also aims to act as a forum for analysing and discussing the on-going proposals of revising the EU policies in these areas.

Background

A number of converging global dynamics have spurred a new global rush for agricultural land and water resources. This phenomenon has been referred to as ‘land grabbing’. It mainly rests on three inter-related causes: i) the food crisis and the need to secure reliable supply of cheap food for water and land scarce countries (such as the Gulf States) by outsourcing food production; ii) the need to diversify energy sources and to boost biofuel production; iii) the financial crisis which has exacerbated speculation on food and land as a result of huge amounts of capital seeking for more secure and profitable investments than traditional markets. Although the acquisition of farming land per se is not a new phenomenon, the character, scale, pace, orientation, and key drivers of the current wave is a distinct phenomenon, which seems to be closely tied to major shifts in power and production characterizing the new global political economy.

This process involves governments and private investors from both industrialised countries and emerging economies securing large tracts of farming land in

marginalised rural areas by means of long-term lease or purchase agreements. The purposes of land deals are generally related to the investor's need to grow crops for food or energy purposes either for export or to secure its own requirements, because of a lack of local land and/or water resources. These transactions have major implications in terms of water and land use change in the targeted countries. The way agreements are negotiated in consideration of local environments and societies can have substantial implications for human security and sustainability. While some studies have argued that 'land grabbing' is a major threat to the rights and livelihoods of the rural poor in the developing world, others have pointed to potential opportunities arising from these wave of new investment in what has been a long-neglected sector. However, the real extent and the nature of this new phenomenon is currently difficult to assess both because of the lack of reliable data and the lack of transparency on land governance matters in particular regarding planning and decision-making processes, contractual agreements, and issues of community involvement and compensation.

Description of the seminar series and speakers

The purpose of the seminar series is to discuss the identified issues by attracting contributions from leading international scientists active in this field of enquiry. The table below identifies the topics of interest and the selected speakers.

Seminars are run **on Wednesdays at 14**. The duration of each seminar is **3 hours**. A full agenda is provided below.

Topics	Speakers	Dates	Venue
<p>“Land deals: drivers, scope and impacts. The pathway towards more responsible investments”</p>	<p>- Peter Messerli (University of Bern) “Marginal land or marginal people? Analysing patterns and processes of large-scale land acquisitions in the Global South”</p> <p>- Kaitilin Cordes (Earth Institute, Columbia University) “Large-scale land acquisitions, contract farming, and human rights”</p>	<p>22 October</p>	<p>Ca' Tron, Santa Croce 1957 Venezia</p> <p>Room A1</p>
<p>“The water dimension of global land acquisitions”</p>	<p>- Maria Cristina Rulli (Politecnico di Milano) “Water appropriation in large-scale land acquisitions”</p> <p>- Ward Anseeuw (University of Pretoria), “Challenges in accounting for global investments in farming land”</p>	<p>5 November</p>	<p>Ca' Tron, Santa Croce 1957 Venezia</p> <p>Room A1</p>
<p>“Conflicts and land grabbing”</p>	<p>- Laura Fregolent (University IUAV of Venice) “Conflicts, landscape and renewable energies”</p> <p>- Matilde Carabellese (University of Naples) “Land grab: the case of soya and Argentina”</p> <p>- Filiberto Altobelli (Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria) “Food security and Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment: international debate and policy initiatives”</p>	<p>26 November</p>	<p>Palazzo Badoer San Polo 2468 Venezia</p> <p>Room Tafuri</p>
<p>“Data availability and transparency in global land acquisitions”</p>	<p>- Martin Ostermeier (Hamburg, GIGA), “The Land Matrix – Patterns and Challenges of Tracking Large-Scale Land Acquisitions”</p> <p>- Stefania Bracco (University of Siena) “Large-Scale Land Acquisitions in Africa: Exploring Actors, Roles and Responsibilities”</p>	<p>10 December</p>	<p>Palazzo Badoer San Polo 2468 Venezia</p> <p>Room Tafuri</p>

<p>“Land and water resources: balancing the needs for food and energy”</p>	<p>- Mario Giampietro (University Autonoma Barcellona) “The Food-Energy-Water Nexus: A Multi-scale Bioeconomic Perspective”</p> <p>- Holger Hoff (Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research) “Large-scale land acquisitions and the water-food-energy nexus”</p> <p>- Emma Li Johansson (University of Lund) “Virtual water exports from land acquisitions in Africa”</p>	<p>14 January</p>	<p>Palazzo Badoer San Polo 2468 Venezia</p> <p>Room Tafuri</p>
<p>“EU and International Land deals”</p>	<p>- Giuseppina Siciliano (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) “European transnational investments in agricultural land: drivers, dimension and geography”</p> <p>- Giorgia Giovannetti e Nadia Cuffaro (University of Firenze; University of Cassino) “Large scale land acquisitions in developing countries: new evidence and development challenges”</p> <p>- Tim Krieger (University of Freiburg) “How Institutions Shape Land Deals: The Role of Corruption”</p>	<p>28 January</p>	<p>Palazzo Badoer San Polo 2468 Venezia</p> <p>Room Tafuri</p>