



**Brussels Rural Development Briefings**  
A series of meetings on ACP-EU development issues

**Briefing session n° 9: Land access and rural development:  
new challenges, new opportunities**

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**Large-scale land acquisitions for agricultural investment: Trends and issues**  
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***Executive Summary***

Over the past 12 months, several large-scale acquisitions of farmland in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia and Southeast Asia have made headlines in a flurry of media reports across the world. Increased agricultural investment may bring macro-level benefits (GDP growth, government revenues), and opportunities for raising local living standards.

But large-scale land acquisitions may also result in local people losing access to the resources they depend on for their livelihoods.

Despite the media reports, there is still very little empirical evidence about these processes and their positive and negative impacts. FAO, IFAD and IIED are undertaking a study to better understand trends and drivers, land tenure and contractual arrangements, and impacts on land access for rural people in recipient countries – with a focus on sub-Saharan Africa. IIED is also participating in World Bank-led research to examine these issues in 30 countries worldwide. Both studies are still at an early stage.

This presentation draws on preliminary findings from the FAO-IFAD-IIED study, as well as on earlier research about the land access impacts of the spread of biofuels and about land tenure issues within REDD (Reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries).

Based on (still limited) available data, it sketches some key trends and drivers, and outlines some of the issues that need to be addressed in order for increased investment to translate into real improvements in people's lives.