Land and Agricultural Commercialisation in Africa (LACA)

PLAAS
Institute for Poverty, Land, and Agrarian Studies
Research Question

How does the restructuring of agro-food systems resulting from land and agricultural commercialisation affect agrarian economies and livelihoods in Africa?
Project Research Design

• Investigate the relative merits of large and small farms;
• their implications for labour absorption and growth in Africa’s farm sector;
• assess three models of land and agricultural commercialization in comparative perspective.
The Kenya Case Study: Meru Agriculture Sector
National Level System Dynamics

• Kenya’s econo-demographic conditions question the political viability of large land holdings (estates and plantations).
• This has resulted in the break-up of large estates in other areas of the Kenya highlands.
• Many other estates went into receivership.
• New large ventures often controversial.
• Kenya is transiting from a ‘release’ phase of agrarian conflict and reform to ‘renewal’ under a new constitution.
Regional Level Dynamics

- Exemplars of the three models operate within a predominantly small-holder sector
- Traditional system highlights niche adaptation and ‘ecozone symbioses’
- Agro-ecological zones remain a primary influence on production strategies and organisation
- Household strategies tend to emphasize diverse income streams and risk-spreading
Commercial Commodities

- Coffee
- Tea
- *Catha edulis* (miraa or khat)
- Horticulture (mango, french beans, snow peas, etc.)
- Potatoes, wheat
- Livestock
Common 30m x 30m french bean bean plots
Large french bean plot
Revival of Coffee
The Revival of Coffee
Under County Governance
Adding value through roasting and tasting
Miraa farm from above
Miraa farm from within
200 year old tree & mbaine miraa
Coevolving Production Models Hypotheses

Linkages and interactions across the diverse commodity based systems appear to be increasing over time.

Success of outgrowing schemes instructive but not necessarily indicative of model’s viability on national/continental scale (Oya 2012).

Plantations must root themselves in local economy.

Strong culture of agriculture critical for adaptive capacity, innovation, and resilience.
Implications of the diminishing land frontier?

Highlights the role of new frontiers (or domains) for growth, rural employment generation, and innovation; large – scale ‘model’ actors continue to contribute to some of the domains
NEW FRONTIERS / DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS

- Technological and management enhancements
- Markets and post-production value addition
- Institutional Cooperation and Synergies
- Governance and legal reforms
- New sources of local capital (emergent farms)
- Revival of Indigenous Cultural Dynamics (monoculture)
EXAMPLES

• Seeds, micro-irrigation and greenhouses, biological pest controls
• Financial instruments, branding, value addition
• Research & information sharing, gender empowerment
• County governments
• New avenues of ag-related employment
• Conflict management on periphery and lowland fringe and other externalities; new entrants trying to establish plantations face major problems in these regions
Emergent new large/small farmer group strategies