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Family farming and land governance: towards a people-centred approach

Synthesis of findings of a research project
supported by the International Land Coalition



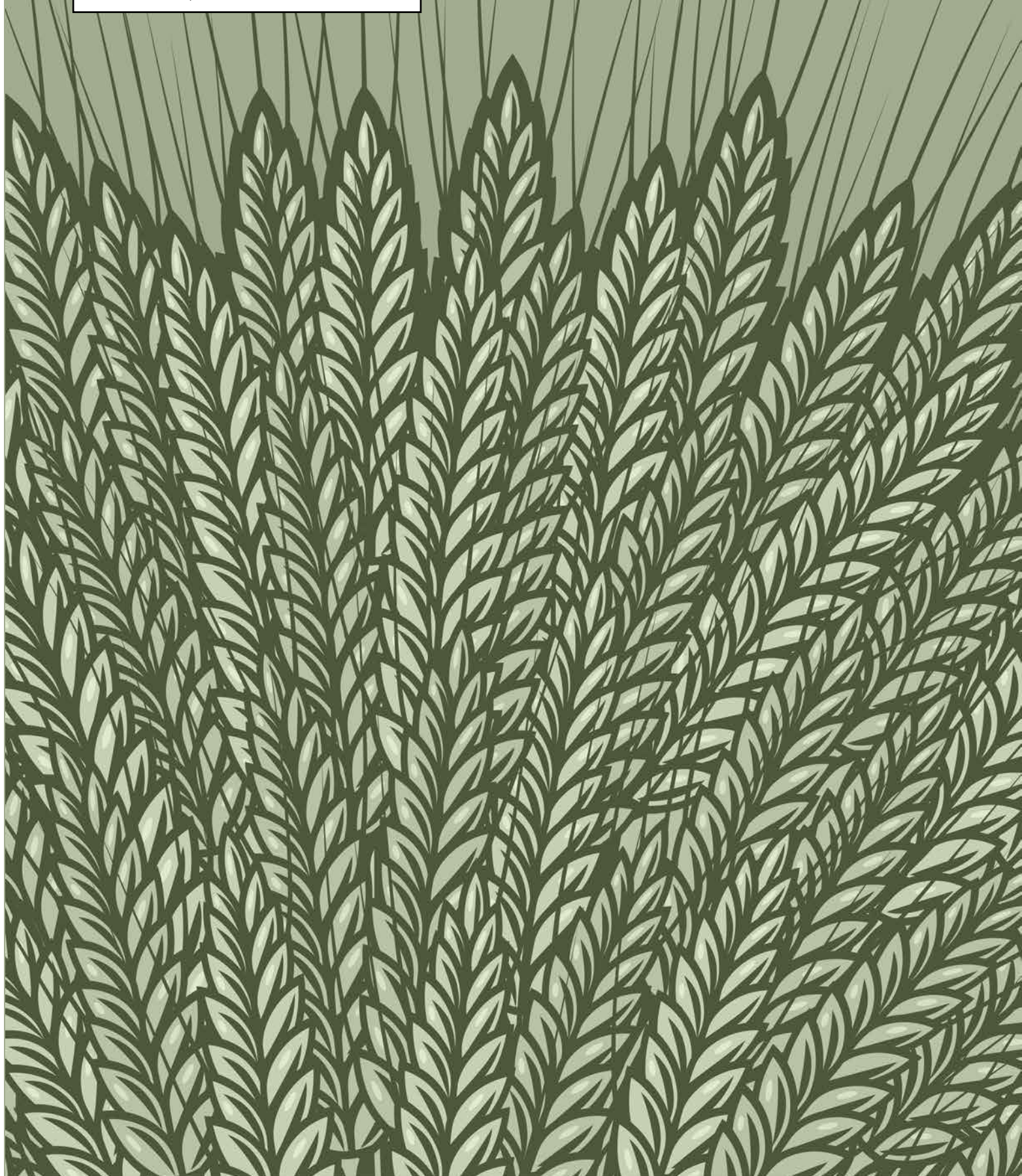
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This paper is part of the wider research project:
**Family Farming and People-Centred Land
Governance: Exploring Linkages, Sharing
Experiences and Identifying Policy Gaps,**
coordinated by Silvia Forno, Luca Miggiano
and Michael Taylor.





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Natural Resources Institute (NRI)

NRI is a multi-disciplinary centre of excellence, whose mission is “to discover, apply and share knowledge in support of global food security, sustainable development and poverty reduction”. NRI provides research, training, consultancy, and advisory services in support of agricultural development, natural resource management, and social and economic development, working with the public and private sectors and with civil society, primarily in developing countries.



Foreword

“We will work together as a coalition to ... ensure equitable land distribution and public investment that supports small-scale farming systems.”

Antigua Declaration of the International Land Coalition, 2013

The members of the International Land Coalition (ILC) share a common concern that family farmers and small-scale producers must be given their rightful place in feeding the world of the future. They also share a recognition that secure rights to land, water, and other natural resources are a foundational element for this to be achieved.

This synthesis paper attempts to learn what might be some of the elements of success, bringing together the results of six different research projects supported by ILC across the globe. As such, this paper is one step towards giving more substance to the concept of “people-centred land governance” – i.e. land governance for people, with people, and by people – that ILC members defined and committed themselves to in Antigua, Guatemala in 2013.

Undertaken during the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) in 2014, this research is intended to provide some pointers in the ongoing and long-term effort by ILC’s membership and beyond to work towards the conditions that will enable family farming to thrive. We hope you find it useful.

Michael Taylor

Director, ILC Secretariat

ILC has been a proud supporter of the
International Year of Family Farming



List of acronyms

AU	African Union
CCRO	Certificate of Customary Right of Occupancy
CPLP	Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries
CBO	Community-based organisation
CSO	Civil society organisation
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
FNS	Food and nutritional security
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILC	International Land Coalition
LPI	Land Policy Initiative (African Union Commission, African Development Bank, and UN Economic Commission for Africa)
LSLA	Large-scale land acquisition
NGO	Non-government organisation
PALOP	African Countries of Portuguese Official Language
SAGCOT	Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests
VLUP	Village Land Use Planning (Tanzania)

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Executive summary

Family farming

There are at least 1.5 billion small-scale family farmers across the world. They depend largely on their own production for food and livelihoods, and make huge contributions to local and global markets and to food security, estimated at over 80% of food supply in many countries. Nevertheless, a large proportion of family farmers live in poverty. This paper synthesises the findings of a research project supported by ILC to investigate constraints and opportunities in ensuring land rights for family farmers and to identify approaches that assist family farmers to prosper sustainably and promote sustainable food security.

Family farmers are diverse, including arable farmers but also those dependent on renewable natural resources, such as mobile pastoralists, hunter-gatherers, fisher-folk, and a variety of indigenous groups. Some family farmers are profitably integrated into agricultural markets; a majority survive by combining subsistence and market production with part-time employment and other sources of income, but with no clear route to prosperity. Others, unable to secure adequate livelihoods, come under pressure to abandon the land but lack alternative occupations. Agricultural development policies often fail to address the needs of this diverse array of small producers, or to mobilise their potential contributions to food security and economic development.

Market dynamics, high population growth, urbanisation, and environmental changes have significant impacts on small family farmers, who also face limitations in land access, labour, markets, skills, appropriate technologies, and sources of credit, along with recurrent cost/price squeezes resulting from rising costs of external farm inputs and fluctuating market prices. Although small farms can make more efficient use of labour, they face severe constraints in competing with large commercial operations that are able to exploit economies of scale to supply export markets in bulk. This leads some observers to insist that family farming must integrate with agribusiness in order to survive and to safeguard global food security.

Land governance

The mechanisms through which society determines how land is used and for what purpose, and how rights and benefits are distributed, are central to food security, social inclusion, the future of rural regions, and the quest for environmental sustainability. Yet the control and ownership of land are principal sources of social, economic, and political power in human society. Due to unequal patterns of land distribution, and poor recognition of their importance, family farmers occupy only small proportions of agricultural land in most countries, frequently under insecure and uncertain forms of tenure. In some countries land concentration has increased markedly, reducing the space for basic food production, forcing the poorest out of farming, and undermining food security both for farm families themselves and at national scale. Since 2008 large-scale acquisitions of agricultural land by

private investors have expanded, especially in Africa; these are concentrated in productive, higher-population regions and are estimated to amount to 15–35% of all remaining arable land, excluding forests.

Together these trends lead to increasing social conflicts over land and agricultural development models. Other land governance problems impacting on family farmers include widespread tenure insecurity, limited development support, diminishing opportunities for women to access land and produce sufficient food, non-recognition and erosion of functional customary land management systems, and increasing fragmentation of farm plots and landlessness. Secure land rights enable farmers to invest, but formal titling of individuals or households is not necessarily a priority to improve farm incomes, which may be more constrained by other factors. In Africa in particular, land titling is vulnerable to elite capture and can have negative impacts on women and vulnerable groups.

Case study findings

The studies, undertaken in China, Colombia, India, Nicaragua, Tanzania, and the Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa, show the importance of secure tenure in enabling access to development support and demonstrate that diverse tenure arrangements, including the recognition and titling of groups utilising land resources in common, can provide tenure security. They demonstrate the importance of land governance institutions capable of fair land allocation, conflict resolution, and participatory land use and development planning, whether land is owned by individuals, groups, or the state.

Well-functioning rental markets work in favour of family farmers, enabling them to access and release surplus land, as in China. Where women have secure land rights, household nutrition, food security, and incomes can all improve, and proactive efforts to enable women to acquire land and strengthen their voice, capability, and influence benefit all community members, as the Nicaragua study shows. In southern India, the persistence of indigenous land tenure and farming systems has prevented land fragmentation and alienation through communal land and labour sharing and sustainable natural resource use over hundreds of years, yet these systems lack formal recognition. Specific measures are needed to enable young people to take up farming where traditional systems like this can no longer provide land access.

In the various cases investigated, family farming has significant potential to care for the environment and to adapt to changing climatic and economic conditions. The Tanzania study shows the importance of complementing low-cost, locally delivered land certificates with participatory land use planning arrangements at village level and at broader territorial scales in order to reconcile multiple demands on land and natural resources.

Key messages and recommendations

The research shows that the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) and the African Union's Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa have real potential for application at national and local levels in moving towards more effective, people-centred land governance.

Agricultural development strategies and land interventions need to become better aligned with the diverse needs of family farmers, to avoid bias towards corporate investors and minorities of more prosperous small farmers.

The studies all argue for the establishment of territorial platforms through which farmers' organisations and indigenous groups can engage with local government and other actors to craft responsive local policies and plans.

The research points the way towards practical actions that merit support from international agencies, governments, and rural development actors as a whole:

- » Increase investment in improving the capacity and reach of land administration services.
- » Develop institutional arrangements for land governance and land use planning and participatory rural development planning that are locally and regionally responsive.
- » Improve the inclusiveness of agricultural development strategies and land policies to respond to the full range of land users, and maximise family farmers' contributions to food security.
- » Apply demand-driven, low-cost, participatory approaches to land registration, with fuller dialogue and consultation with potential beneficiaries, including both women and men, individual farm households, and customary groups.
- » Extend family farmers' capabilities and the capacities of farmers' organisations through increased global public investment in rural extension and agricultural services that take account of the full diversity of family farmers.
- » Ensure more effective territorial planning and agricultural extension support that promotes more sustainable use of land and natural resources at both farm and landscape scales, and take a farmer participatory approach.
- » Facilitate systematic research and data collection on the potential of family farming and its role in food and nutritional security, in the context of broader development dynamics.
- » Build broader social coalitions linking farmers' organisations to other actors to facilitate institutional and policy change for people-centred land governance.
- » Family farming and land governance: towards a people-centred approach



Introduction

This synthesis paper reviews the results and findings of six papers that form part of a research project supported by the International Land Coalition (ILC) into the linkages between family farming and land governance, alongside an overview of relevant recent academic and policy literature.¹ It reflects on the experiences of family farmers and of the civil society and research organisations and agricultural regions involved in the research in securing land rights and improving land management. Its objectives are: (i) to synthesise and locate the perspectives articulated by the six case studies for a broader audience, and (ii) to identify policy gaps and recommendations for land governance approaches that are people-centred and respond to the development problems and aspirations of small-scale family farmers of all kinds in the developing world.

Small-scale family farming is the overwhelmingly dominant mode of agricultural production throughout the developing world. There are at least 1.5 billion family farmers globally, living and working on farms of two hectares or less (World Bank, 2007), together making large contributions to local and global food markets and to food security, and also depending primarily on their own production for livelihoods and food supply. Although most of the relevant literature and much of the discussion in this paper focus on small-scale agriculture, family farmers can also be considered to include indigenous peoples, mobile pastoralists, and fisher-folk, as well as urban farmers reliant primarily on other sources of livelihood but also on arable farming.

Small farming households also form the majority of the 1.4 billion people estimated to live in extreme poverty, on less than USD 1.25 per day (IFAD, 2011).² Due to unequal patterns of land distribution, family farmers occupy only a small proportion of agricultural land in most countries, frequently under insecure and uncertain forms of tenure. The control and ownership of land are amongst the principal sources of social, economic, and political power in human society, and the governance of land is central to public policy concerns around food security, social inclusion, eradication of poverty, the future of rural regions, and the quest for environmentally sustainable economic development. Effective land governance is needed as a foundation for economic development as a whole and is relevant to all land users in both urban and rural areas, both for livelihoods and for investment purposes.

In this context, ILC's members, mainly comprising farmers' and civil society organisations (CSOs), have adopted the concept of people-centred land governance. This refers to "forms of land governance (referring to formal or informal land tenure arrangements and/or land reform measures) that promote human dignity and well-being, poverty eradication, social justice and gender equality, inclusive and diverse societies, and protection of human rights.

1 In 2014 ILC provided support to six case studies by civil society organisations (CSOs) and researchers engaged in assisting small farm development in China, Colombia, India, Nicaragua, and Tanzania, and an overview for Portuguese-speaking Africa. The individual studies can be downloaded from: <http://www.landcoalition.org/en/node/2539>

2 IFAD (2011) estimates based on 2009 data. There are no comprehensive, reliable, and up-to-date estimates of global numbers of small-scale family farmers, or of those living in poverty.

The values and principles that underpin people-centred land governance are in line with international benchmarks including the Voluntary Guidelines [on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests]³ (FAO, 2012).³ Assessment of the links between land and family farming sheds light on the ways in which land governance can contribute to higher-level development goals to strengthen food security, poverty reduction, women’s social and economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability, through a people-centred approach.

3 See the Antigua Declaration, in which ILC member organisations committed to pursuing a set of ten principles for people-centred land governance in their development and advocacy work. <http://www.landcoalition.org/news/antigua-declaration-ilc-members>

Research and policy background

Small-scale and family farming

Family farming can be defined as farm production managed on a household basis that depends exclusively or mainly on family labour which is substantially devoted to the farm (Lipton 2004; Guanzirolo et al., 2013). Family farming can also utilise labour from within local communities and extended family and social networks (Toulmin and Gueye, 2003), forming a principal means of social and economic organisation across large geographical areas, in which household composition, assets, and organisation of livelihood activities both on- and off-farm are important factors determining what families can produce and how (Belières et al., 2002). The vast majority of family farms are small (less than two hectares in Africa and Asia, but often larger in Latin America and Europe) and are substantially reliant on their own production for food security. Small farmers produce large amounts of grains and staple foods for sale in local and regional markets, making huge contributions to developing countries' food security, and also producing commercial crops such as cocoa, coffee, cotton, tobacco, and a wide range of other tradable commodities for global export markets.⁴ FAO (2014a) estimates that family farms produce more than 80% of food in a sample of 30 countries, based on the share of land held by family farms and the value of food production in each country. In addition, family farming can be considered to be multi-functional because it can also contribute to environmental services, biodiversity and landscape conservation, the rural economy, and national economic development as a whole.

Small family farmers – often referred to from different perspectives as smallholders or as peasant farmers⁵ – constitute an extremely diverse grouping, characterised by generally complex livelihood systems and to varying degrees by production both for their own consumption and for the market, and also by dependence on temporary or seasonal employment in agriculture or other sectors and remittances from family members to provide household cash income (Kay, 2009; Fernandes, 2008). They tend to be asset-poor and seek to maximise and stabilise or smooth incomes and to minimise exposure to risks of different kinds by diversifying production, maintaining autonomy, and reducing dependency on specific markets. Diversification into non-farm activities is also a common

4 Exact and comparable regional estimates of family farmers' total production and marketed outputs are not available due to inconsistent and incomplete national datasets and a lack of systematic research on this topic.

5 In this paper, the terms family farmers, small-scale farmers, smallholders, and peasant farmers are used interchangeably; however, they originate from different intellectual and policy discourses, and so from some perspectives may be considered to carry different meanings. Some family farmers may have large land holdings and may produce large volumes; others may operate highly capitalised and market-integrated farm operations on relatively small areas, and would not conform to classical definitions of peasant farmers partially dependent on subsistence production and on part-time or seasonal labouring.

element in farm households' livelihood strategies. Similarly, the livelihoods of pastoralists, indigenous groups, and others primarily or formerly reliant on natural resources have also diversified into other activities, including arable farming and wage labour.

Dynamics of global market integration, high population growth, urbanisation, and climate and environmental change have significant impacts on small family farmers, who also face limitations in access to land, labour, markets, skills, appropriate technologies, and sources of credit, and face ongoing or recurrent cost/price squeezes due to rising costs of external farm inputs and fluctuating crop market prices. While these dynamics vary regionally, export-led agricultural development has become increasingly dominant globally and in the more extreme cases, as in Central America, has markedly increased land concentration and reduced the space for basic food production by small producers, forcing the poorest farmers and younger generations from the land and undermining food security both of farm families themselves and at national scale (Baumeister, 2013). Since 2008 large-scale land acquisitions (LSLAs) by private investors for biofuels, food, and fibre production have expanded globally, and together these trends have led to increasing levels of disputes over access to land and social conflicts over agricultural development models (White et al., 2012; Cotula, 2013).

In 2012 the Land Matrix (www.landmatrix.org) reported LSLAs totalling 83 million hectares worldwide since 2000, with 60% of agricultural land deals concentrated in Africa, and the greater proportion of areas devoted to a combination of biofuels and non-food or "flex" plantation crops.⁶ Although LSLAs are widely perceived as a threat to family farming, a study found that reliable data remain elusive due to limited access to information and practical and methodological challenges (Cotula et al., 2014). Schoneveld (2014) estimates that 22.7 million hectares of Africa's arable land have been acquired by corporate entities, equivalent to 15–35% of all remaining potentially available crop land, excluding forests (Chamberlin et al., 2014). Many of these acquisitions have taken place over a relatively short period; they are concentrated in more productive, high-population regions and development corridors, where large numbers of smaller deals also take place (Cotula et al., 2014; Jayne et al., 2014). Commercial land acquisitions thus have considerable localised impacts on family farmers.

The composition of farm households and livelihoods tends to be dynamic and subject to change due to demographic changes and economic development processes, which can involve generational shifts. Family farmers can be characterised as falling broadly into three groups: (i) primarily self-provisioning and highly vulnerable to adverse trends; (ii) oriented towards local markets but partially reliant on own production and still vulnerable to impoverishment; and (iii) globally competitive and highly market-integrated (Vorley, 2002). Similarly, from a more dynamic point of view regarding livelihood strategies, family farmers can be seen as including those who are "stepping up" to emerge as small- to medium-scale commercial producers; "hanging in", with relatively stable incomes but failing to prosper; and "stepping out", whose limited access to labour, land, skills, assets, farm inputs, and markets leaves them facing destitution, en route to abandoning farming to join the labour market (Dorwood et al., 2009; Scoones, 2009).

6 Flex crops are crops such as sugar cane, oil palm, and eucalyptus with the commercial advantage of yielding multiple products, including foodstuffs, biofuels, fibre, and industrial raw materials, saleable in different markets, depending on demand, price, quality, and market conditions.

Movements of poor farmers off the land and into urban labour markets – or “deagrarianisation” (Bryceson, 2002) – are set to continue, particularly where alternative employment is available for younger generations. However, there is also evidence that large numbers of small family farmers cling to the land and to rural society as a result of deep socio-cultural attachments and a lack of alternatives, or “hang in” to farming as a central element of strategies for survival and social reproduction, although it may offer no clear route out of poverty or to greater prosperity – a process described as “repeasantisation” (Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2010; Van Ploeg, 2010).

Family farming can make more efficient use of labour than large-scale farm enterprises, tending to be an efficient and resilient mode of production, as economists have long observed. Where labour is abundant, and levels of capital investment are low, this leads to higher levels of productivity than in large-scale commercial farming (Hazell et al., 2007). Equitable access to land has been shown to be important in strengthening longer-term economic development (Deininger and Squire, 1997; Ravallion and Datt, 2002). Farming families are also consumers, and the rural prosperity that resulted from “land to the tiller” agrarian reforms in East Asian countries in the 1940s and 1950s proved important in promoting urban and industrial development (Deininger, 2003). In the developed economies of Europe and the USA, the food industry is still supplied primarily by family-based farm businesses.

Despite the advantages of small-scale farming, however, commercial farmers and globalised agribusiness are able to exploit economies of scale by making investments in large-scale mechanised production and by combining operations vertically, linking inputs, production, and marketing, and horizontally across different farms and product markets. Consequently, despite advantages in terms of efficiency in labour use and potentially higher productivity per unit area, this so-called “inverse relationship” between farm size and productivity tends to break down, and small farmers face difficulties in competing to meet demands for bulk supplies to urban consumer and export markets, which require higher levels of farm investment (Poulton et al., 2006; Hazell et al., 2007).

There are arguments, linked to concerns about net global demand, production, and food security, that family farming should only be supported where it can be transformed into small-scale commercial farming or closely integrated with agribusiness through outgrower and contract farming arrangements (Collier and Dercon, 2009). These options present opportunities for some, but it is difficult to envisage any rapid transformation of the majority of family farms into commercial operations, which require higher levels of resources and carry large risks. Moreover, technology-led productivity drives and systematic integration of small farm operations into agribusiness supply chains would fail to address the multi-functional character of family farming as a basis for social reproduction, local food systems, and sustainable environmental and landscape management.

Studies from Africa and Asia suggest that 50–70% of smallholder farmers are not making the transition from subsistence-oriented to commercial farming (Ferris et al. 2014). For Africa, there is evidence that the majority of small farmers are at best poorly integrated into markets, with insecure tenure rights and inadequate infrastructure and support services

(Ferris et al., 2014; Jayne et al., 2014). In highly populated and productive areas of Africa, farm sizes are declining as a result of population growth, and there is little room to expand production or to allocate land to larger-scale investments. Broader economic development is not creating off-farm employment quickly enough to absorb surplus farm labour (Jayne et al., 2014), and there is little evidence that industrial development or urban migration can offer sustainable alternatives to farming for large numbers of rural people in the foreseeable future. Moreover, the “Green Revolution” is proving slow to take root in Africa, and the productivity increases it produced in Asia have occurred relatively slowly over an extended period of 20–40 years, have not reached the poorest farmers, and have been slow to take root in other regions (Wiggins, 2008; Wiggins et al., 2011). These circumstances suggest that agricultural development strategies centred around technology-led productivity drives, increased inward investment, and the potential of a small minority of emerging successful commercial family farmers are misplaced and in need of adjustment.

Land governance

In response to increasing pressures on land due to population growth, rising food prices, extraction of natural resources, and the global wave of LSLAs, the focus of land policy debate has shifted, globally, from questions of how to ensure secure tenure, access to land, and fair land distribution to broader questions of land governance.

The World Bank considers land governance to include: the ways in which property rights are defined, exchanged, and transformed; public oversight of land use, land management, and land taxation; the nature, management, acquisition, and disposal of state land; the nature, quality, and accessibility of publicly available land information; and the ways in which land disputes and conflicts are resolved and managed (Deininger et al. 2012). The online Open Government Guide defines land governance as “a series of processes, including recognition, registration and enforcement of land tenure rights, land-use administration, management planning and taxation, information provision and dispute resolution”.⁷

The focus on land governance encourages greater policy interest and more systematic and sustained support to governments to improve public land management and administration capacity, solve problems of incomplete, inadequate, and corrupt land administration, and improve responsiveness to the needs of the full range of land users, including the rural and urban poor. To address shared societal objectives, however, land governance must consider how public policies and institutions can reconcile and regulate competition amongst conflicting social, political, and economic interests in land, the trade-offs amongst these, and the consequences for different social groups.⁸ In other words, it involves addressing the various factors that shape access to, and use, control, and distribution of land resources. These include not only policies and institutions in the land

7 See <http://www.opengovguide.com/topics/land/>

8 Governance can be defined as “the manner in which public officials and institutions acquire and exercise the authority to shape public policy and provide public goods and services” (World Bank, 2007: 67) or, as the World Governance Assessment project puts it, as “the formation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, to bring about shared societal objectives” (Hyden et al., 2008: 3). See <http://www.odi.org/projects/1286-world-governance-assessment>

sector, but also those concerned with agriculture, water, natural resources, environment, infrastructure, urban planning, and economic development. In practice, actions by different branches of government, private investors, civil society, and community leaders, and the customary and informal practices and forms of property rights used by different social groups, all affect the use and control of land.

The principal land-related problems and trends affecting family farmers noted in the literature include a lack of secure tenure or property rights for large numbers of small farmers, especially women, growth in land concentration and large-scale land investment and acquisition, inequalities in land distribution, the erosion and non-recognition of customary and indigenous land management and tenure systems, increasing fragmentation of farm plots and landlessness, and restrictions on land access resulting from a combination of demographic and market pressures (Jayne et al., 2014). Accordingly, the principles of people-centred land governance, as promoted by ILC, emphasise the importance of actions to address these problems, including assistance to family farmers in protecting and developing existing production systems, and enable the participation of farmers' organisations in territorial and ecosystem management and decision-making over land.

Although much of the literature is concerned with rights and access to land, farm livelihoods, and agricultural investment from a common analytical perspective, in practice the agricultural strategies adopted by governments are often only weakly aligned to land governance questions, failing to engage with broader societal concerns about land access and land rights.⁹ In many countries, national and local elites and investors tend to have privileged access to government land allocation and secure land titles, as a result of their influence over governments or deliberate political action. Even where equitable legislative frameworks for land are in place, these problems can be reinforced by inappropriate and outdated legislation or by weak land administration capacity. Examples include large-scale land allocation to corporate interests across much of Central America (Baumeister, 2013); privileged access to land titles by politicians manipulating land documentation in Kenya (Onoma, 2010); and seizures and sales of productive, seasonally available flood land by politically connected commercial mafias in Bangladesh (Barkat et al., 2001). Further examples where private investors and the better-off and better-connected gain access to land more easily than ordinary farmers are provided by the case studies from China and Columbia.

Difficulties in institutional coordination and amongst government agencies involved in land administration, the complexity of bureaucratic processes, inadequate land information systems, and incomplete or inadequate geo-spatial data can frustrate effective land service provision for all land users (Deininger et al., 2012). In Mozambique, for instance, central government land allocation to commercial investors has in various cases overridden established customary land rights, without due consultation and legal process (Norfolk and

9 This can be the case even when land, agriculture, and natural resource management fall under the same ministry, for instance in Mozambique. Responsibilities for different aspects of land governance may be dispersed amongst multiple agencies, poorly coordinated with other sectors, and divided between central, regional, and local government, as in Ghana or large federal nations such as Brazil and India, and are often unclear and may be contested. Because of the political nature and economic significance of decisions over land, they are subject to influence by multiple public and private interests, and institutional prerogatives of different sectors and levels of government may be jealously defended.

Hanlon, 2013; ORAM, 2013; Quan et al., 2014). Land information systems are characterised by very partial coverage, inadequate, incomplete, or inaccurate data on agricultural land parcels, and the utilisation of public land and extensive natural resources, particularly for land utilised by small farmers, indigenous groups, and mobile resource users and common property resources of various kinds. As a result, the land claims and utilisation requirements of these groups are often not recognised or properly understood, and the governance of the resources on which they rely is weak, their tenure rights are insecure, and land disputes and conflicts can easily arise.

The general effects of secure land rights in enabling farmers to invest in production, care for the land, improve production, and achieve livelihood security are clear in the land tenure literature (Deininger, 2003; Toulmin and Quan, 2000). In countries and locations where individual property ownership is the norm, tenure security can be provided through land titling programmes, but potentially any tenure reform can have negative social impacts (Lawry et al., 2014). Secure tenure is not the same as individual property rights, and land titling processes have proved to be part of the problem rather than of the solution, notably in Africa and in other contexts where they impose individualised land rights onto pre-existing community land use and tenure systems (Otto and Hoekma, 2012). Where titling programmes have failed to assess and engage with the full range of local land rights holders, they have been subject to elite capture and have tended to exclude poorer, more vulnerable land users, often including women and those whose rights are secondary to and derived from land-holding families under customary arrangements (Toulmin and Quan, 2000).

There is no good evidence that freehold land titles as such are necessary to achieve efficient productive land use or to enable access to credit. It is just as likely that land rights secured through lower-cost methods and other forms of tenure, including functional customary systems, will assist in raising small farm productivity, provided other conditions such as access to inputs, markets, and extension support can be met (Lawry et al., 2014; Deininger, 2003; Place and Otsuka, 2002). International donors and agencies now recognise the importance of providing secure land rights for all land users under a diverse range or “continuum” of forms of tenure (UN-Habitat, 2008), alongside institutional development to enable fair adjudication and allocation of land rights and appropriate development planning (FAO, 2012; Deininger et al., 2012). Secure individual and household use rights can be provided by extending greater recognition to informal and customary tenure arrangements, particularly in Africa (Lawry et al., 2014), where this is more likely than titling to protect small farmers by allowing the continuation of relatively egalitarian land management (Hoekma, 2012). Nevertheless, agricultural development policies and programmes may tend to favour land titling for more successful farmers and private entrepreneurs, to the neglect of family farmers’ needs.

There are complex links between land governance and food security, and in general this is an important question for further research and policy debate. Unimpeded access to land is essential to enable farmers to produce food, and secure land tenure assists them to invest in farm inputs and land improvement and in gaining access to markets and a wide range of services, thus contributing to food security. Access to adequate land and control over land

use and planting decisions, particularly by women, enables farmers to diversify production and grow an adequate range of healthy, nutritious food, which may not be available through national or local markets. Effective governance of land and territory claimed by indigenous groups is also fundamental to their food security.

On the other hand, food insecurity is a major “push” factor leading farming families to leave the land, due to low productivity, lack of cash incomes, and limited availability of food in local markets, resulting typically from combinations of poverty, drought, adverse weather, land degradation, conflict, market failures, and absence of social safety nets (Flintan and Bending, 2012). Nevertheless, even when family members migrate and abandon farming, secure family connections to the land and secure rights to even very small household plots remain of central importance for women, providing fruit and vegetables to enhance household nutrition and incomes from market sales, as research in South Asia has demonstrated (Hanstad et al., 2004).

Although globalisation of agri-food systems has tended to favour large market-integrated agro-enterprise (Collier and Dercon, 2009; Poulton et al., 2006), in many contexts family farming still performs quite efficiently, making sustained contributions to national and household food security and adapting effectively to changing market conditions (Toulmin and Gueye, 2003). Rural social movements, farmers’ organisations, and CSOs concerned with family farming argue for increased local and national control over food systems to ensure that family farmers and rural communities can not only access sufficient good-quality, nutritious food, but also make full contributions to domestic markets. This perspective, encapsulated in the idea of “food sovereignty”, prioritises reduced reliance of food producers and local food systems on export and import markets and on the globalised agri-food industry (Rosset, 2013; De Schutter, 2014).

The land governance questions discussed here and the associated development challenges facing family farmers are further explored in relation to the findings of the case studies in the remaining sections of this paper. Consideration is also given to additional perspectives from the literature. In addition to the governance of tenure and its significance for food and nutritional security, consideration is given to questions of agricultural and wider development dynamics, customary and indigenous land management systems, land and the environment, and needs for improved territorial governance.



Case study findings

The case studies were provided by CSOs and national research organisations (in some cases working in collaboration) focused on the delivery of support to rural development and overcoming poverty. All were concerned with understanding how the land tenure status of farmers (as farm households, individuals, and farming communities) and existing land governance systems affect access to development opportunities, how broader development policies and practice affect land rights, land access, and land use, and how land policies and programmes can provide positive assistance to family farmers and farming communities.

This section highlights the principal findings and discusses common issues arising from the following six research projects:

- » ACTUAR (2014) “Community-focused land governance: experiences and recommendations of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) Peasants’ Platform”;
- » AgroSolidaria (2014) Contribuciones de la agricultura familiar en Colombia desde el enfoque de la multifuncionalidad. Tres estudios de caso de agricultura familiar campesino e indígena;
- » EcoAgriculture Partners (2014) “Participatory Land Use Planning to Support Tanzanian Farmer and Pastoralist Investment: Experiences from Mbarali District, Mbeya Region, Tanzania”;
- » Nitlapan and Trocaire (2014) “Women in land access. Case studies: experiences of Nitlapan and Trocaire in the department of Matagalpa, Nicaragua”;
- » Suma, T.R. (2014) “Customary vs state laws of land governance: Adivasi joint family farmers seek policy support. The case of Kurichya joint families in Wayanad, southern India”, MS Swaminathan Research Centre;
- » Zuo, T. and Wang, Z. (2014) “Negotiating sustainable livelihoods in rural north-west China. The impact of policy and governance on smallholders’ options for land use”, China Agricultural University.

Each study was concerned with identifying good practice and contributing to evidence-based advocacy, with the work by CSOs tending to have a stronger advocacy focus. Five of the six papers (those from China, Colombia, India, Nicaragua, and Tanzania) reported on in-depth case studies of family farming in specific localities and regions, linked to the development of recommendations for policy and practice. The other paper (ACTUAR, 2014) adopted an advocacy focus, based on the experiences and perspectives of farmers’ organisations in the Portuguese-speaking African countries.¹⁰ Methodological approaches differed. The papers by research institutions (notably those in China and India) were methodologically more rigorous in collecting and synthesising quantitative and qualitative data gathered from farmers and farm households through systematic surveys and

interviews, also paying attention to the institutional policy context by investigating regional development dynamics, the political economy of land and agriculture, and the historical evolution of land policies. Nonetheless, the CSO papers also systematically examined the effects of land governance and policy environment on family farmers, based on their own practical experiences of assisting farmers in developing policy recommendations for practical land governance improvements.

Taken together, the case studies and ILC background papers available provide an overall picture of concerns relating to land governance and food security, offering country- and region-specific analysis of the combined impacts of development trends and weak or inadequate land governance on family farmers. The studies' conclusions reflect some of those in the published literature but are also based on rich empirical detail and the experience and perspectives of farmer support organisations and of family farmers themselves, including both women and men.

Most of the papers address inter-related cross-cutting issues, including land tenure security, gender and land, land use and territorial planning arrangements, customary and indigenous land management systems, land and agri-food systems, land and resource conflicts at different levels, and the effects of current land policies and broader governance institutions on family farming. The findings and principal themes and issues raised are discussed below.

Land tenure security and agricultural development dynamics

The research provides practical confirmation of one of the most important points established in land tenure policy literature, that the formal recognition (or "titling") of both individual households' land rights and collective, community-based, and customary tenure and land management systems can provide secure tenure solutions for small farmers (Toulmin and Quan, 2000; Lawry et al., 2014). Either or both may be needed, and various ways of securing tenure can be appropriate in different contexts. The case studies all show the importance of easily accessible systems to secure individual household rights, illustrated for China in Box 1.

Box 1: Negotiating sustainable livelihoods in rural north-west China

Family farming in China is predominantly small-scale and conforms to the classical understanding of peasant farming, combining reliance on farming for food supply and income with a wide portfolio of livelihood options. As farmers face rapid change due to high rates of economic growth and industrial development, livelihoods are no longer confined to subsistence farming or manual labour on others' farms, and entrepreneurial mindsets are developing amongst family farmers. The paper focuses on current limitations in farmers' rights and opportunities to obtain secure formal tenure, obtain compensation for loss of land, exchange land rights through rental arrangements, and participate in negotiations about land development and land use change. Amongst the key research findings:

- » Secure officially recognised land rights are shown to be of central importance for farmers to access policy incentives, technologies, credit, and new market opportunities, and thereby increase outputs and incomes and improve livelihoods. Peasant farmers have multiple needs for secure land use rights: to make improvements in arable and livestock production, to rent land both within and outside the local community as farm operations require, and to obtain authorisation to take up formal employment or run a business.
- » There is growing differentiation amongst family farmers, according to how well they are able to organise land use and labour to exploit different market opportunities and accumulate assets. Better-off households and established business people have better access to local government officials and are better able to register land rights and access agricultural development support. Given adequate opportunity, women farmers can be especially enterprising.
- » The rate of industrialisation is not keeping pace with the transformation of rural livelihoods it leads to, and older farmers who continue as staple food producers face particular difficulties in adapting. Temporary and permanent entry of younger and middle-aged people into urban labour markets is increasingly common, but poorer, less educated people can only access insecure, low-wage employment. Secure rights to rural land remain important to all farming families to achieve prosperity.
- » Secure tenure rights also enable access to public subsidies, in theory directed towards family farmers as a whole. Whereas "smart" subsidies can stimulate smallholder productivity, subsidies tend to be politically directed and monopolised by urban business people. In practice they do not include basic technical improvements, and fail to keep up with the cost/price squeezes that small producers face in upgrading farm equipment. Poor farmers tend to treat subsidies and credit as grants to assist their livelihoods, as returns from making "lumpy" investments in greenhouses and machinery are uncertain.
- » Environmental conservation and afforestation schemes arbitrarily restrict access to common lands, with negative impacts on livestock farmers utilising areas officially designated as "wasteland". The better-off can access subsidies to acquire grazing land and plant woodlands, but greater accessibility for small farmers would both limit environmental degradation and improve broad-based prosperity.
- » The quality of land governance provided by local government officials is problematic, as they may have vested interests in consolidating and contracting out land for development and urbanisation schemes, and in business ventures of their own. As a result, they fail to assume responsibilities for good public planning, and local community leaders often collude with them.
- » For all of these reasons, the functioning and accessibility of land allocation and rights registration systems operated by local government need to be improved, alongside capacity to apply and adapt agricultural development assistance in response to family farmers' needs and demands. Rights to public land, i.e. "wasteland" of uncertain status, need to be ascertained in consultation with farmers, and better accountability and education of local officials and community leaders are required.
- » Central government's policy learning about the nature and value of small-scale family farming appeared significant during the 1980s liberalisation of socialist collective farming; although not continued during the later full-scale economic liberalisation phase, it now appears to be resuming.

Source: Zuo and Wang, China Agricultural University (2014)

The studies from China, Tanzania, and Lusophone Africa demonstrate that accessible, low-cost, and locally based systems for formal registration of land rights can be quite appropriate to farmers' needs, whether land is held and managed individually or on a collective basis by indigenous groups, as in Nicaragua (Nitlapan and Trocaire, 2014) or in the Lusophone African countries (ACTUAR, 2014). User rights can be secured whether or not the ultimate property rights rest with the land users themselves or with the state (Zuo and Wang, 2014), and fully transferable freehold title is always necessary for economic empowerment of small farmers. Appropriate legislation can enable the registration of tenure rights and the creation of transparent market rules for transfer of rights to land use and occupation amongst individual farmers or farm households, in ways that are consistent with constitutional and customary principles that regard land as the property of the state (as in China, Mozambique, and Angola) or of established customary land-holding groups (as in Tanzania).

The case studies also corroborate the view that land rental markets can work in favour of small farmers by redistributing access to under-utilised land and encouraging more efficient land use (Deininger, 2003). In jurisdictions where property rights are freely transferable through land purchase markets, however, as in Central America, family farmers can be disadvantaged due to the growing concentration of land in the hands of large commercial farming interests and national elites, and rising land values (Baumeister, 2012; Nitlapan and Trocaire, 2014).

The studies from India, Lusophone Africa, Colombia, and Tanzania indicate the importance of legal recognition and support for customary and indigenous land use and tenure systems. They argue for greater centrality of family farmers in agricultural and rural development policy and programmes, given their roles in producing the bulk of food in domestic markets and their broader potential. Simplified universal administrative procedures and comprehensive top-down land registration programmes can, however, provoke disputes that government may not be prepared or able to deal with, especially if they do not take account of the complexity of pre-existing land rights, community boundaries, or common land areas and natural resources subject to shared community use as sources of pasture, fodder, water, or a wide range of forest products. Whether land assets are secured on an individual household or on a community basis, more demand-driven approaches from the local/community level are generally needed, with a stronger element of social preparation for land rights registration.

As a whole, the studies demonstrate that diversity and socio-economic differentiation amongst family farm households are enduring features of rural society, linked to broader development trends. Centralised agricultural policies and top-down land registration programmes can arbitrarily reinforce inequalities if directed only towards better-off farmers. The case studies demonstrate the negative impacts that these approaches can have on farmers and on food security, in particular for women and where official development strategies favour the interests of external agribusiness and pay insufficient attention to land governance and to alternative development opportunities for those affected. They also illustrate how diversification of family farmers' livelihoods is taking place, leading to exits from agriculture by younger people due to limitations in agricultural opportunities caused by deficiencies in agricultural policies and changing markets, and growing pressures on land resources.



Nevertheless, farmers' organisations and community-based organisations (CBOs) can play significant roles in the development of small-scale family farming, particularly in terms of marketing, farmer education, and providing access to farm inputs and technologies, but also as vehicles for securing land rights for farmer groups, farmer participation in government decision-making about land use and allocation, and advocacy for improvements in land and agricultural policy. Although the case studies do not provide systematic coverage of farmer organisations, they do illustrate the active roles of community organisation in improving land governance. For example, this is being done in Nicaragua through legal recognition of indigenous community organisations and the establishment of active women's groups within them (Nitlapan and Trocaire, 2014), and in Tanzania through the role of democratic village assemblies in land allocation and management (EcoAgriculture Partners, 2014).

In some cases customary community organisations continue to be strong, as shown in the study from India, but without legal recognition and organisational capacity to negotiate with governments and private sector interests, little can be achieved. Given the difficulties in formalising CSOs in China, reference to independent community and farmer organisations is notably absent from the China study. Despite common interests amongst family farmers in the region studied, they remain dependent on goodwill and understanding from state and party to achieve land governance improvements and policies that can respond to their changing needs as agriculture develops and urban economies grow. In contrast, in Lusophone African countries, farmers' unions and farmer support organisations have become actively engaged in securing farmer and community land rights, linked to international advocacy networks, to defend family farmers' interests in relation to LSLAs and to promote development policies more appropriate to their development needs (ACTUAR, 2014).

Box 2: Community-focused land governance: experiences and recommendations of the CPLP Peasants' Platform

ACTUAR engaged with the national peasant federations in Africa's five Portuguese-speaking countries (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe) to assess the extent to which current legal and institutional frameworks promote or hinder people-centred forms of land governance that recognise and value the role of family farmers, and the scope for addressing land governance through frameworks and mechanisms for coordinating policies and institutions for farming, the environment, and food and nutritional security (FNS).

In all five countries, family farming is the primary supplier to local food markets and a guaranteed source of subsistence for producers' families; it also offers mechanisms for sustainable natural resource use and landscape management based on local communities' indigenous knowledge. Proportions of the population engaged in agriculture range from 16.9% in Cape Verde to 94% in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau (FAO, 2011), but high levels of malnutrition persist, notably in Angola (24.4%) and Mozambique (36.8%) (FAOSTAT, 2012). Pressure from domestic and foreign corporations for control of land and natural products in agri-food value chains has increased in recent years and, despite family farmers' importance as food producers, they have only a limited place in agricultural, social, and economic development policies.

Although these countries have laws recognising customary rights, these have generally been poorly disseminated and applied. Statutory law and government interests prevail over customary practice, and in Angola in particular the law remains unclear on customary land rights, despite rural land being predominantly community-owned. There is poor inter-sector coordination and a lack of farmer representation in policy debate, and land services are under-resourced. Women's rights depend on interactions of civil property, family, and inheritance law with agrarian legislation and with customary tenure systems, which tend to discriminate against women. The CPLP Peasants' Platform member organisations have found that more needs to be done to guarantee coherence between legal and customary norms concerning land and natural resource use. Structures are needed for land administration and management at local and community levels to protect the existing customary tenure and production systems of family farmers.

The paper argues for the incorporation of principles underlying the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) and the AU Land Policy Framework and Guidelines into national legal and institutional frameworks to promote more decentralised, democratic land governance mechanisms. It foresees an important role for the Food and Nutrition Security Strategy of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries in enabling civil society and family farmers' organisations to participate in policy-making and institutional coordination through Food and Nutritional Security Councils (already established in Brazil and Cape Verde) at local and national levels to ensure that food policies take proper account of the social, economic, and environmental functions of land.

Recommendations include:

- » Empowerment of family farmers and vulnerable groups for meaningful participation in decision-making on land, in the context of increasing commercial pressures;
- » Creation of observatories to monitor and evaluate the impact of policies and programmes affecting family farming and FNS; studies to support formal recognition of family farmers as a policy constituency in defining improved policies; better statistical data disaggregated by gender and vulnerable groups;
- » Territorial development based on sustainable increases in agricultural productivity instead of more intensive use of external inputs;
- » Public awareness-raising and training of peasant organisations and government officials on the multiple roles of family farming and the relevant international agreements and instruments.

Source: ACTUAR (2014)

The case studies all identify problems of incoherent institutional frameworks for land governance and problems in the operation of state administrative and legal systems as a whole, which are ill equipped to manage these changes. As a result, they fail to address the needs of small farmers, indigenous peoples, and customary groups for secure tenure, equality before the law, and eligibility for financial and other development services. These problems result from over-centralised or uncoordinated sector policies and weak capacity and vested interests in local government (as in China and India) and from policy swings and regime changes (as in Nicaragua).

While the case studies point to the need for greater decentralisation to bring land administration and development planning closer to the people, it is not a panacea. In the absence of adequate checks and balances there are risks of corruption, as local government officials with private business interests can collude in land development to the disadvantage of small farmers, as in the China case. There are significant deficits in capacity for decentralised land use planning, which is needed to reconcile the multiple land uses and interests of land users, especially in the context of agricultural development programmes and LSLAs, and where indigenous and mobile groups are present. This is demonstrated clearly in the Tanzania study (EcoAgriculture Partners, 2014) and is also identified by farmers' organisations in Portuguese-speaking Africa (ACTUAR, 2014) and in the case study from Kerala in southern India (Suma, 2014).

The studies highlight inequalities in access to land, the continuing relevance of agrarian reforms to redistribute under-utilised and excessively concentrated land holdings, and impacts of large-scale land acquisitions and agricultural strategies that fail to take into account pre-existing land rights, the potential of family farming, and livelihood dependence on natural resources (ACTUAR, 2014; AgroSolidaria, 2014; Baumeister, 2012). They also underline the need for innovative mechanisms to enable greater access to land, particularly for women and younger people, due to market and population pressures on dwindling and increasingly fragmented stocks of community land resources (ACTUAR, 2014; Nitlapan and Trocaire, 2014).

Family farming, food security, and agri-food systems

The contribution and potential of family farmers in improving food security is a cross-cutting issue raised by each of the studies. For instance, according to ACTUAR (2014) and AgroSolidaria (2014), insecure tenure jeopardises the right to food. It also constrains the capacity of family farmers to supply and enrich local and regional food markets with a diverse range of nutritious food (Suma, 2014) and to make sustained contributions to national food security.

The institutions governing the allocation and use of land resources play a key role in shaping the future development of rural areas, agri-food systems, and family farmers' place within them. Thus land governance is of direct relevance to improving food security and the management and future development of agriculture and food systems, and people-centred approaches to land governance should be expected to take account of small farmers' needs for productive livelihoods and consumers' requirements for safe and sustainable supplies of nutritious food, both of which require functioning systems governing land allocation, distribution, and use.

Farmers' organisations and rural social movements have therefore tended to argue for: (i) satisfaction of local needs for land access, tenure security, equitable delivery, and availability of land administration services to all social groups and participation in decision-making on land allocations and investments; and (ii) creation of enabling environments through which local producers can meet local, regional, and national food needs. Some national and international farmers' organisations go further, advocating the principle of food sovereignty, under which nations, rural territories, and peasant farmers would achieve greater control over agri-food systems.

Food sovereignty is subject to differing interpretations. It is often invoked in opposition to the corporate control of food systems and of land, and in defence of the interest of family farmers. It is also argued that the reliance of both consumers and producers on export markets should be entirely eliminated, which requires an end to dependency on imported food and farm inputs and devolution of control over land and natural resources to rural communities and farmers' organisations (Rosset, 2013). Although complete autonomy of family farmers and rural regions from globalised food markets is unrealistic, the underlying ideas of focusing on food production to meet local needs, developing farmers' skills and capacities based on their indigenous knowledge of local environments, strengthening farmers' capacity to trade in local and regional markets and independence from corporate control of globalised value chains, and more localised democratic control of food policies are all highly relevant to the fundamental land governance concerns of regarding how land should be utilised, by whom and for whose benefit, and how land tenure should be governed (De Schutter, 2014). These sorts of measures can be regarded as necessary concomitants of people-centred land governance systems that are more responsive to farmers' needs.

Women's role as food producers and their access and rights to land

Women's roles as food producers and their capacity and opportunities to obtain secure land rights are clearly identified as central questions for land and agricultural policies to address. Where small farmer household reproduction is under strain, women and girls face the sharpest impacts from poorly planned agricultural or tenure formalisation interventions (FAO, 2011). The poorest groups, a large proportion of family farmers in many countries, and women in particular often stand in need of financial and legal assistance and practical support to enable them to acquire land through freehold or leasehold markets or via community and individual titling schemes and to improve production, underlining the need for integrated, holistic development approaches and interventions with a gender focus, as shown by the ILC study in Nicaragua.

Box 3: Practical experiences of enabling women's land access in Matagalpa, Nicaragua

This paper addresses the land and development problems faced by women in rural Nicaragua in a post-conflict context in which agricultural strategy is marked by policy swings, regime changes, and handovers of land to the national private sector and external agribusiness investors. Land and agricultural policies in the Central American region arbitrarily reinforce social inequalities and reduce the space available for food production to meet national, local, and family food and nutritional needs. In this context, NGO assistance and financial support have become extremely important for family farmers, and especially for women, in providing mechanisms to purchase land and improve land access at household and community levels.

The paper's main concern is to extend good practice by understanding the effectiveness of these approaches in meeting women's development needs and those of farming families and rural communities as a whole, by improving food and nutritional security. It acknowledges the role of broader dynamics in driving livelihood and land use changes and the impacts these have on women, but focuses on the differentiated roles and unequal powers of men and women at household and community levels and analyses the impacts for women of different approaches to rural credit adopted by two NGOs. One (Trocaire) focused at the household level, and the other (Nitlapan) on development of women's groups within the community. By comparing the results and limitations of the different methods used, this research shows how women's capabilities in food production and economic development are constrained by unequal power relations both within nuclear family households and by established patriarchal practices within wider kinship and community groups, which mediate the dynamics and pressures of wider regional development and the political economy.

While household land registration and titling have privileged men as household heads who tend to dominate land use decisions and favour cash crop production, there are also tensions between community-based titling of indigenous *mancomunidades* (associations of indigenous people and family groups formed to pursue common aims) and gendered approaches which directly engage women, due to a lack of voice and organisation within the community. Although women's effective powers and security may be stronger in some respects in collective land holding than in individual approaches to land titling, there are risks that they will not be. Consequently, it is necessary to advance on both fronts, by addressing security of tenure and gender needs simultaneously; although official approaches fail to do this, NGOs can make a difference. The paper argues for the need to go beyond an individual household focus to address gender and surrounding local social, economic, and political dynamics systemically (see also Berdegué et al., 2012) by securing both individual women's and community land tenure. The paper shows that practical, integrated approaches can be used to assist peasant income generation, well-being, and autonomy by combining farming methods that improve sustainability and the quality of nutritional outcomes with strengthening women's capabilities and links to product markets, rather than a more traditional focus on credit, financial services, and land tenure alone. A principal lesson is that improvements to land governance cannot be made in isolation, as they must support development needs.

Source: Nitlapan and Trocaire (2014)

The case studies all show how in different ways household rights registration and land titling schemes can deny women's rights, due to their built-in bias, entrenched social gender inequalities, and neglect of common property resources on which women's livelihoods depend. Despite the importance of community-based approaches to land management and tenure, these can involve tensions with secure tenure rights and stronger voice for women, as shown in the Nicaragua case. Broader experience with community-based land registration in Mozambique and individual titling programmes conceived, for example in

Kenya, as purely technical processes, but which ignore cultural barriers, shows that specific measures to eliminate gender bias and proactive efforts for women's empowerment are needed in land registration programmes of all kinds.

Women's access to land and their influence over family land use decisions have become more vulnerable, particularly within patrilineal systems, but also in matrilineal systems that historically have provided women with greater degrees of tenure security and authority, as illustrated by the ILC study from southern India (Suma, 2014).

Access to land for youth

For young people, farming is often associated with poverty, heavy demands for manual labour, and limited and uncertain remuneration – conditions of rural life from which they often wish to escape. Barriers and lack of incentives for young people taking up farming are noted by the various case studies. Significant amongst these barriers are limitations in access to land, due to population growth and land fragmentation, pressures on and non-recognition of customary communal land management systems (Suma, 2014), lack of professional training (ACTUAR, 2014), and the unattractiveness of farming as a livelihood compared with other occupations (Zuo and Wang, 2014).

A recent report on youth and agriculture (FAO, 2014b) notes that the principal mechanism for young people to access land is inheritance, but that it is rare in developing countries for young people to acquire land from living parents, because land ownership is perceived as an adult privilege. Young women's inheritance opportunities are further restricted by discriminatory inheritance rules and practices in both formal laws and customary systems. The FAO report highlights examples of state and non-state programmes aiming to provide land to young would-be farmers in the Philippines, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mexico, Egypt, and Uganda.

In many rural societies, land scarcity and competition, declines in productivity, reliance on wage labour for cash incomes and food purchase, and the monetisation of land transactions are bringing about inter-generational changes in customary land systems. In an African context, in addition to land fragmentation and limited opportunities for young people in agriculture, traditional kinship and inheritance patterns have tended to become unstable, leading to inter-generational conflicts over land, in some cases linked to broader civil and political conflicts (Quan, 2007).

Customary and indigenous land tenure and management systems

The ILC research in India describes a unique, functional, and resilient indigenous land tenure system based on large extended families, illustrating the advantages and development potential that indigenous land management systems have in safeguarding farmers' own food security and livelihoods, making full use of available labour, and ensuring sustainable management of natural resources. In India and elsewhere, indigenous groups face similar types of pressures due to lack of policy recognition of traditional land rights and land use systems, despite some integration of customary law in the federal constitution. Despite progress in indigenous land titling in some countries, indigenous peoples across the globe suffer land conflicts as a result of the conversion of natural forests for private land acquisition and natural resource extraction by outside commercial interests.

Box 4: The Kurichya indigenous tribal system of land management, Kerala, India

The research provides a vivid ethnographic, historical account of the functional indigenous land tenure and management system of the Kurichya Adivasi (scheduled tribe) farmers, involving land and labour sharing and sustainable natural resource management based on large extended families. The system centres on joint families linked by matrilineal kinship, typically comprising over 100 members sharing traditional housing complexes and large land holdings, including hills, wetlands, and arable areas. Individuals access land for their own consumption and market sales through maternal inheritance and admission to extended families through marriage, but land is managed collectively under customary rules. A large share of food needs is met by collective labour arrangements within male and female groups on shared family land, over which women traditionally exert authority. Agro-biodiversity is rich and a diverse range of indigenous crops and cultivars are produced, alongside natural produce gathered from managed wetlands and forest areas. The research shows how the system has adapted to historical changes, social upheavals, and the monetisation of the regional economy under colonial rule, sustaining collective food security over seven centuries, preventing land fragmentation, and avoiding landlessness. Nevertheless, the system has been neglected by centralised agrarian and land policies and is now under pressure to change from market development, encroachment, and growth of the wage labour economy, as government fails to recognise the validity of collective land tenure arrangements or to provide assistance to strengthen traditional resource management and support a managed integration into commercial markets, despite the enormous productive potential.

A detailed picture emerges of a society undergoing transition, in which more and more individual households are established, and the majority of male youth now work as labourers or in semi-skilled trades. Education, health care, and other social needs are creating a greater need for money, and the ensuing occupational changes contribute to shifts in family organisation and inheritance patterns towards standardised patrilineal norms. Official development programmes oriented towards individual farmers rather than social groups and legal assumptions of patrilineal transmission of rights have encouraged fragmentation of collective lands and households, with negative impacts on women's authority within the community and their abilities to produce food.

Nevertheless, key elements of the collective family system are still maintained. Although shared agricultural labour organisation amongst men has become more difficult, women have become more engaged in collective food production so as to ensure household reproduction rather than individual cash income, which has become a priority need in order to access formal education, health care, and consumer markets. Extended households have adopted different strategies to cope with change, including division of the great majority of the land in some cases, and the formation of trusts to legalise collective family ownership while granting some land rights to individual households and enabling decision-making to continue along customary matrilineal lines.

The paper investigates the current development options and explains how the research has led to the creation of an advocacy group representing the different extended families and sections of the Kurichya community. The researchers mediated with state government to explore opportunities for policy change and practical assistance to sustain the indigenous land management and production system and to facilitate sustainable integration into regional markets as the best alternative source of income to low-skilled labouring. The key recommendation is for recognition of the customary matrilineal system in state policies, so as to enable development of the collective system for income generation and to strengthen women's land rights and maintain food security and adaptive capacity against future change, avoiding the complete erosion of the matrilineal-based system for anything except ritual purposes.

Source: Suma (2014), MS Swaminathan Research Centre

Different questions face pastoralists and other mobile groups reliant on access to grazing land, water, and other natural resources over extensive land areas that provide them with sources of food and water and a basis for income generation. The allocation of land in rangeland areas for commercial cattle rearing or irrigated agriculture, safari tourism, or natural resource conservation can consume or block access to essential seasonal resources, grazing corridors, and water supplies for animal and human consumption, leading to radical changes in livelihoods and to poverty and destitution. Along with associated planning and environmental issues affecting family farmers, this is illustrated by the Tanzania case study (EcoAgriculture Partners, 2014). The establishment of community-based natural resource management schemes provides an alternative, at least in buffer zones surrounding reserved areas, provided that rules of tenure, access, and use are clearly defined and agreed amongst pastoralists and settled farmers, and vis-à-vis other stakeholders.

Box 5: Participatory land use planning to support Tanzanian farmer and pastoralist investment in green growth

This case study, conducted in Mbarali District in Mbeya region, southern Tanzania, focuses on Village Land Use Planning (VLUP) policies introduced in response to growing land and natural resources conflict, needs for improved tenure security, and the government's interest in establishing a land market. The district experiences persistent conflicts over land and water due to declining land productivity and dwindling water resources to maintain hydrological flows and support irrigation and livestock watering.

Comparative assessment of two villages, one of which has a formal land use plan, showed that VLUP as a formal legal and participatory process helps to reduce conflicts between land users and enhances conservation efforts. Benefits include renewed annual stream flows, regeneration of natural vegetation in delineated forest areas, recovery of animal populations, and better, more systematic management of crop–livestock interactions. VLUP processes also facilitate the issue of Certificates of Customary Right of Occupancy (CCROs) to farmers by village assemblies. These are of less value to pastoralists utilising communal grazing lands, as they limit opportunities for seasonal migration between grazing areas.

The study shows how pastoralist groups are becoming partially settled, with men seeking to acquire tenure rights over fixed grazing areas and women over arable plots for small-scale household food production, but still remain dependent on access to seasonal grazing and water resources on common land. As a result, they compete and may come into conflict with settled agriculturalists and private investors seeking land for agriculture and other purpose in the Southern Tanzania Agricultural Growth Corridor (SAGCOT).

Investigation revealed that village councils and villagers themselves have limited familiarity with the steps required and insufficient budgetary resources and technical skills to develop effective VLUPs. The planning process can also be subject to capture by dominant local groups, leading for instance to impositions of restrictions on livestock access to water resources. Moreover, the plans do not take account of future requirements of population growth or potential land use change, although private and public agricultural investments in the SAGCOT region are likely to expand.

The single-village focus of VLUP as currently practised, which does not take into account the interests of minority pastoralists, reduces its effectiveness as a means of managing boundary disputes between villages and natural resource conflicts between different social groups. VLUP therefore needs to be complemented by participatory natural resource mapping and land use planning at a landscape or territorial scale as a necessary component of effective land governance, to help regulate access to land and natural resources, safeguard minority livelihoods, and avoid land conflicts. The study recommends that district government become more engaged in monitoring and supporting the effectiveness of VLUP by working with community groups and CSOs across multiple villages to develop a district-wide land use plan responsive to the diversity of changing needs.

Source: EcoAgriculture Partners (2014)

Land governance and the environment

Growing policy interest in the environmental dimensions of agricultural land use may present farmers with new opportunities. Debates about sustainable agricultural intensification, climate change adaptation, and the promotion of “climate-smart” agriculture and a “Green Economy” all relate to how land is used and in what interests, and thus to land governance. Discussion of climate-smart agriculture often focuses on improvements in irrigation and the potential of enhanced crop varieties that may require intensive agronomic management and significant investments, which are out of reach to the vast majority of family farmers.

The case studies also draw attention to family farmers’ use of sustainable and low external input or “agro-ecological” approaches (Altieri and Toledo, 2011) based on indigenous knowledge and practice and compatible with agroforestry and conservation farming techniques. These approaches have good potential to both safeguard natural resources and intensify production by improving soil and water conservation and soil health and reducing carbon emissions from farming, while enabling farmers to adapt to a changing climate, increase overall outputs, and produce high-quality foodstuffs sustainably. For this to occur, farmers require not only tenure security but the appropriate technical and business support to increase their skills and productive capacities.

There is largely unrealised potential for environmental payments and subsidies for small farmers with secure tenure to help maintain forest cover (Zuo and Wang, 2014), sustain environmental services (ACTUAR, 2014; AgroSolidaria, 2014), and protect agro-biodiversity (Sura, 2014). Farmers’ tenure rights and control over land use decisions are likely to be critical to success, as environmental payments alone cannot replace crops as a source of income and food (Quan et al., 2014). Other research suggests that they are most effective where they help farmers build productive assets by investing in sustainable land use and improved tree cover rather than restricting farmers’ control over land use (Pagiola et al., 2014).

As a result of climate stress, integrated management of land and water resources is required, not only on individual farms but at landscape scales to achieve sustainability. The case study in Tanzania (EcoAgriculture Partners, 2014) underlines the need for effective participatory land use planning at broader territorial scales to integrate agricultural development planning and reconcile multiple demands on land resource in pursuit of a green economy.



Towards good practice for people-centred land governance

The research as a whole illustrates the effects on family farmers of wider regional economic development dynamics, urban growth, and the ensuing land use changes and competition for land, and the importance of understanding these processes in building more people-centred land governance systems and agricultural development policies. This concluding section first highlights the overall characteristics and range of actions that can work to strengthen land governance for the full diversity of family farmers, and briefly considers three overarching aspects: how to move from sound consensual principles incorporated in the VGGT to practical action; the need to incorporate land governance into efforts to establish sustainable agri-good systems; and the importance for these purposes of improved territorial governance.

Diversity of family farming and land governance responses

The case studies argue consistently for policies and approaches sensitive to the needs of different types of family farmers, showing that improvements in land governance can be linked to more sustainable and people-centred approaches to development. They raise a series of specific points for the development of better land governance practice to meet family farmers' needs:

- » Equal treatment of land users and rights holders under multiple forms of tenure – although different specific rights may attach to leasehold, freehold title, land rental, and certificates of customary occupation, tenure security and access to justice should apply to all land users, male and female;
- » More socially responsive land administration services delivered by local government and in partnership with farmers' and community organisations to cater for the diversity of local needs;
- » Promotion of state policies to stem and where possible roll back the acquisition of large-scale holdings by corporate or individual actors, where this erodes the land rights of smallholders;
- » Programmes to facilitate access to land and provide skills training for young farmers, male and female;

- » Intelligence/evidence-based and participatory overall design of land programmes, coordinated with locally responsive agricultural development policies to meet family farmers' different needs, including those of women, youth, and vulnerable groups;
- » Capacity building for stakeholder territorial planning, with participation by farmers and their organisations at community and broader landscape or district levels to reconcile conflicting land use interests.

Table 1: Relevant land governance responses for different types of family and small-scale farmers

<i>Types of family farmers</i>	<i>Key issues</i>	<i>Land governance responses</i>
Small-scale – majority, partially market-integrated	Tenure security, linked to market and development support Access to commons: natural resources for use and income generation Dispute resolution under land/demographic pressures	Community land delimitation and titling Formalisation or titling of individual or household rights, or equivalent guarantees of security Enabling of land rental Legal empowerment and capacity building of farmers' associations and community organisations Secure access to village commons and natural resources
Small- to medium-scale, prosperous, market-integrated	Tenure security, linked to market and development support	Rights awareness and legal support For poor and vulnerable groups: securing community tenure, common resources, household plots, and informal land rental or borrowing arrangements are likely to be particularly important
Small-scale poor and vulnerable	Tenure security and rights protection Access to commons: natural resources for use and income generation	
Extended family/lineage-based farming groups and communities	Tenure security, linked to market and development support Access to commons: natural resources for use and income generation	Community land delimitation and titling Formal recognition and development of customary tenure systems Enabling of customary dispute resolution Community territorial planning and management forums
Women as farmers – in diverse family settings	Tenure security and rights protection Gender equity, women's participation and voice in farmer and community organisations, in family land use and land access decisions; women's access to justice Recognition by formal and community authorities	Individual or joint spousal title Gender justice in community-based/customary systems Land rental and purchase support schemes Legal empowerment and capacity building For female-headed households, access to formal rights, legal empowerment, securing household plots, land rental, and purchase support are likely to be important
Youth (would-be farmers)	Access to land Exclusion from farmer support services and groups	Access to land for young men and women Mainstreaming youth in farmer groups and local decision-making
Pastoralists and mobile resource users	Secure access to seasonally important grazing, water, and other natural resources	Territorial planning, natural resource use management forums, and user agreements
Indigenous groups	Integrity of indigenous land areas, natural resource management systems, and cultural practices	Community/group titling Legal empowerment and capacity building
Landless farmers	Loss of land and limitations in land access due to land use change, evictions, removals, poorly planned resettlement, land fragmentation	Land redistribution Land rental and purchase support schemes Specific land access schemes for women, young people, and displaced communities

Drawing on the findings of this synthesis, and considering the diversity of family farmers and differing levels of market integration and family farmers in the developing world, Table 1 offers a summary of specific types of land governance issues faced by different groupings of family farmers and the type of interventions appropriate to their needs. In practice the actions and groupings will always overlap, and programmes for people-centred land governance will need to blend and select policy approaches and specific options based on analysis of context-specific-dynamics. These suggestions are not simply blueprints for the technical design of land sector programmes, but elements that multiple actors can address within coherent and evolving multi-level frameworks which include stakeholder dialogue, learning by doing, and deepening understanding of good practice through rigorous analysis of evidence.

Application of land governance principles and guidelines

The livelihood and tenure security needs of family farmers and their potential to contribute to improved food security and more sustainable farm and natural landscapes are not yet sufficiently embedded at policy level or in planning for good land governance. In this context the case studies show how the VGGT (FAO, 2012) and the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa (African Union et al., 2008) are already becoming real instruments for effective dialogue with governments and other actors, in moving towards more effective and people-centred land governance arrangements and promoting policy change for more inclusive and sustainable agricultural development.

The studies show, however, that more action is needed to make these relatively recent policy instruments effective tools and to achieve the necessary policy and institutional change and integration. As identified by ACTUAR (2014), regional intergovernmental organisations and national farmers' CSOs can play important advocacy and practical roles to embed the principles of these instruments more systematically within government policy and planning. This requires greater collaboration and policy coherence amongst government bodies dealing with land, agriculture, natural resources, food security, environment, and economic development planning. Training and capacity building are needed for government and other actors on the application of these principles at sub-national levels, at which participatory territorial planning and integrated policy implementation can occur.

Linking land governance to sustainable agri-food systems

From the perspective of family farmers' organisations, and as reflected in the case studies, the establishment of democratic institutions for agri-food systems and territorial governance, in which farmers' and community organisations are represented alongside other actors, is a necessary complement to people-centred land governance. Improved land access, secure land rights, and increased small farmer influence over agri-food systems have the potential to increase farm incomes and volumes of good-quality, locally available nutritious food, given appropriate policy, organisational, and technical support. This in turn would strengthen food security at local level and would strengthen the resilience of food systems to weather- and market-induced crises.

Improved territorial governance

In response to these broader dynamics and constraints, the case studies advocate more locally responsive and socially inclusive policy-making, for which greater devolution of authority to democratic institutions at sub-national levels is needed. The papers from Colombia, India, Lusophone Africa, and Tanzania all argue for some form of territorial platform through which farmers' organisations and indigenous groups can engage directly with local government and with other actors to craft responsive local policies and plans.

Improved territorial planning and governance are required at multiple scales, from the village or local government through to district, provincial, or regional levels. In terms of the requisite types of governance institutions and platforms, no one size fits all, and consideration needs to be given to existing political administrative structures, the territorial identities of social groups and local communities, and needs and priorities for the management of specific watersheds, landscapes, and natural resource assemblages. Pragmatic shifts are needed in existing institutional arrangements to enable a better linkage of land governance with planning in agriculture and other sectors, adaptation and integration of national policies to become more responsive to local dynamics and conditions, and better representation of rural communities, family farmers, and their organisations alongside other stakeholders.

These findings are consistent with the results of research on territorial dynamics and experimental government programmes undertaken in middle-income and industrialised economies of Latin America and Europe (OECD, 2006; Ray, 2006; Berdegue and Modrego, 2012). This has also highlighted the importance of developing coalitions of actors that can empower local farmers' and community organisations by strengthening network links with civil society, state actors, research institutions, and development agencies to engage with national governments. Such coalitions can facilitate institutional change and pilot innovative mechanisms to strengthen territorial governance to help deliver more sustainable and socially inclusive economic development (Berdegue et al., 2012). The findings of these ILC-supported case studies suggest that these approaches are in demand and have significant potential globally, as economies grow and pressures increase on land resources and on food and nutritional security.

Recommendations

The research findings point towards alternative strategic approaches and policy options that have potential to assist family farmers, tap their productive potential, and enhance inclusiveness and sustainability in rural development and food security. The case studies all make specific recommendations for land governance and related policy improvements to better address the needs of family farmers. These recommendations reflect political demands in civil society for governments to improve gender equity, shift away from an uncritical prioritisation of agribusiness, and guarantee greater small farmer participation in planning. At the same time, they are grounded in empirically identified development needs of family farmers that are broadly convergent in pointing out globally applicable avenues for strengthening people-centred land governance.

In order to address major gaps in development strategy, the following overall recommendations merit increased attention and support from international agencies, governments, civil society, and the broad range of actors in agriculture and rural development:

For governments and international development agencies:¹¹

- » Increase investment in improving the capacity, reach, inclusiveness, and accessibility of land information systems and land administration services.
- » Improve the inclusiveness of agricultural development strategies and harmonisation of agricultural and land policies to respond to the full range of types of farmer and other land user, and maximise the contribution of family farmers to food security.
- » Renew investment in farmer support and extension services that balance and link increases in market output and business support with household food production, better nutrition, and sustainable farming methods tailored to the needs of the full diversity of family farmers.
- » Enable and encourage participatory approaches and institutional arrangements at community and local government levels for land governance, land use, and rural development planning that are participatory and more locally and regionally responsive.
- » Increase and improve monitoring of progress towards secure land tenure for all women and men and inclusive land governance systems.

¹¹ These recommendations are applicable to national governments and to both bilateral and multilateral development agencies. Although their specific roles as donors and recipients of financial and technical assistance will vary according to circumstances and the resources and capacity they have available, essentially they will need to work in partnership to realise common objectives.

For civil society:

- » Develop initiatives to help enable governments to adapt global and regional land governance instruments to local circumstances (the VGGT and the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa) and apply them systematically.
- » Work with governments and donors to apply more demand-driven approaches to land registration based on social groundwork to prepare the participants, incorporating gender needs and protecting the rights of vulnerable and weaker groups.
- » Link practical engagement to enhance land governance with identification of market opportunities, sustainable farming, and resource management initiatives.
- » Focus on building family farmers' capabilities and the capacities of farmers' organisations, rather than simply advocating for recognition of rights and implementation of principles and guidelines.

For research organisations:

- » Conduct additional research, and more systematic data collection and analysis on the development and potential of family farming and its role in food and nutritional security, in the context of broader rural territorial dynamics in different countries and regions and involving farmers' organisations and local research institutions.

For community and farmers' organisations:

- » Collaborate with and participate directly in all these types of initiatives and processes.
- » Extend the capability of farming communities and organisations by building broader social coalitions, and link them to platforms and networks to facilitate institutional and policy change in the direction of more effective, equitable, and people-centred land governance.

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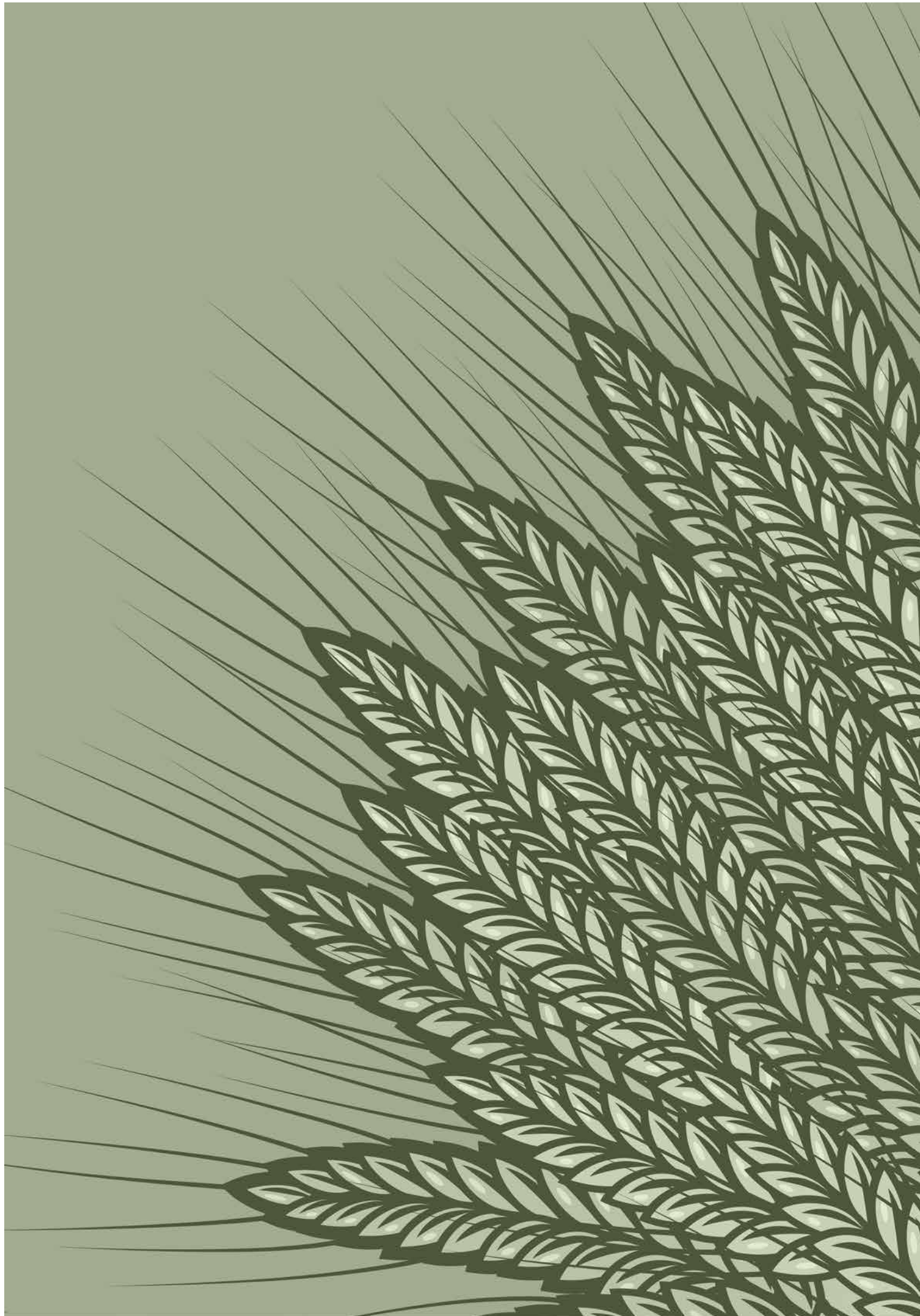
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ILC Mission

A global alliance of civil society and intergovernmental organisations working together to promote secure and equitable access to and control over land for poor women and men.

ILC Vision

Secure and equitable access to and control over land reduces poverty and contributes to identity, dignity, and inclusion.

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