

Pros and Cons of Agriculture Investment in Gambella Region, Ethiopia

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Abstract : Over the past few years, the volume of international investment in agricultural land has increased globally. In recent times, Ethiopian government uses agricultural investment as one of the most important and effective strategies for economic growth, food security and poverty reduction in rural areas. Since the mid-2000s, government has awarded millions of hectares of most fertile land to rich countries and some of the world's most wealthy people to export various kinds of crop, often in long-term leases and at bargain prices. This study focuses on the pros and cons of large-scale agriculture investment Gambella region, Ethiopia. The main results were generated both from primary and secondary data sources. Primary data are obtained through interview, direct observation and a focus group discussion (FGDs). The secondary data are obtained from published documents, reports from governmental and non-governmental institutions. The findings of the study demonstrated that agriculture investment has advantages on the socio-economic and disadvantages on socio-environmental aspects. The main benefits agriculture investments in the region are infrastructural development and generation employment for the local people. Further, the Ethiopian government also generates foreign currency from the agriculture investment opportunities. On the other hand, Gambella people are strongly tied to the land and the rivers that run through in the region. However, now large-scale agricultural investment by foreign and local investors on an industrial scale results deprives people livelihoods and natural resources of the region. Generally, the negative effects of agriculture investment include increasing food insecurity, and displacement of smallholder farmers and pastoralists. Moreover, agriculture investment has strong adverse environmental impacts on natural resources such as land, water, forests and biodiversity. Therefore, an Ethiopian government strategy needs to focus on integration approach and sustainable agricultural growth.

Keywords : agriculture investment, cons, displacement, Gambella, integration approach, pros, socio-economic, socio-environmental

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