Boerstra, Boukje; Dansk Institut For Internationale Studier
boukje.boerstra@hotmail.de
Authors: Boerstra, Boukje, DIIS; Friis-Hansen, Esbern, DIIS; Hundsbæk Pedersen, Rasmus, DIIS; Lusasi, Justin, Sokoine University of Agriculture and Copenhagen University

Title: A literature review of African non-industrial private forestry (NIPF)

This literature review contextualises the role of domestic investors in the literature on the current land rush in Africa. Based on empirical findings from the African forestry sector, it is evident that the scale of domestic investors acquiring land may surpass that of foreign investors; however, the role of these non-industrial private actors and the underlying dynamics of these land-based investments are underexplored and form a gap in the existing literature on land-based investments—or ‘land grabbing’.

We find that the majority of the literature either address large-scale international investments or addresses small-scale forestry in relation to community forest management and agroforestry. However, the empirical findings suggest that a significant amount of land is in fact bought up by a variety of domestic investors. These range from urban businesspersons and government officials to local residents. These land transactions are informed by economic trajectories of both the seller and the buyer, leading to consequent changes to local value-chains. The review further indicates that literature on decentralisation and land tenure change add to the understanding of underlying dynamics facilitating this trend. Parallels are made to the European, US and Australian literature on non-industrial private forestry to capture the complexity of the actors and to explore the usefulness of this conceptualisation in explaining and analysing recent trends in land-based investments in Africa.

This literature review acknowledges the significance of these domestic forces in transforming land use and management systems across Africa. It draws attention to the need to further explore changing rural-urban dynamics in shaping non-industrial private forestry. That is, asymmetric land transactions have led to increased tensions between urban investors and rural sellers. To understand the complexity of these land transactions and the way they transform the African forestry sector, we introduce African non-industrial private forestry to the literature on land-grabbing, and explore the usefulness of the concept in characterising recent trends in African land investments and timber value-chains.