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Title: How national and local contexts shape the impacts of foreign investment in land: a comparative analysis from three African countries

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Recent changes in the global agro–food–energy system, driven in part by consumption trends and climate change mitigation efforts, have led to renewed interest in investment in agriculture and a rush to acquire land among investors. The broader socio-economic and ecological impacts of these land use changes are not always clear and many assessments focus mainly on short-term effects at the local level, without relating them to the wider agrarian and socio-economic transformations that are now underway. Against this backdrop, the objective of the Belmont Forum supported AFGROLAND project is to analyze how large-scale investments in land and agriculture impact on natural resources, poverty, food security, rural economies and local policies in African countries. The project focuses on 3 countries that are, according to a decreasing level of experience in terms of large scale agricultural investments: Kenya, Mozambique and Madagascar. Based on political sciences, economy, sociology, geography and agronomy analytical grid, it adopts a mixed methods approach coupling GIS data, qualitative interviews and quantitative data production (households survey) to conduct within- and cross-country analyses of these dynamics of agricultural investments.

The project comprises 3 main components. It tries to understand what drivers and rules of the game pull, push or regulate agricultural investments at the global and at the national level. It also deciphers the investors' strategies and studies how their business models evolve (or not) in relation to global drivers and national/local governance. It then evaluates how these agricultural investments impact on natural resources (soil, water and vegetation), poverty as well as food security at the national, local and household levels. By taking a cross-country comparative approach, looking at three country cases in the South-Eastern sub-region of Africa, we shed light on differences in the national contexts that reshape the influence of international drivers and shape the concrete outcomes and impact of these agricultural investments.

Preliminary results of the project suggest that although the international drivers at work are the same, the outcomes at local levels in terms of land use change, ecological impacts, food security and

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livelihoods differ significantly due to differences in national policy frameworks, land tenure rights, business climate, resource endowments and path-dependencies regarding investment and business practices. In our presentation, we discuss those differences in terms of the business models applied, the success and failures of investments, as well as their impacts at local level, considering the three dimension of sustainable development.

The presentation will contribute to a better understanding of how national contexts mediate the impacts of distant drivers on local-level land system outcomes. Furthermore, these results contribute to a better understanding of the multi-scale impacts of global agro-food-energy system changes, allowing for the identification of leverage points for managing sustainability trade-offs and synergies in the global land rush.