

les dossiers d'**AGROPOLIS** INTERNATIONAL

*Expertise of the scientific community
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Family farming

Interrelationships between agribusinesses and family farms in Madagascar

Large-scale land appropriations are still under way in Madagascar. UMR TETIS is working with the *Observatoire du Foncier** to monitor the impacts of these dynamics, promote transparency and public debate on these land contracts involving the State, and support the formulation of tailored land policies.

Most investors have halted their projects due to a lack of experience and capital, while others have planted their first crops on a few hundred hectares of land. Competition and complementarities with respect to the family farms differ depending on the setting, but some agrarian dynamics are similar.

The legal transfer of thousands of hectares of land to investors has transformed local land rights holders into squatters, despite the 2005 land reform that recognizes local land rights. Households that accept to surrender their land do so in exchange for compensation promises (rent, employment, infrastructures) or they pretend to be the owners although they are not the real landowners and land users. The losers are mostly cattle farmers who, for the richest of them, may react and violently oppose the companies or villages with which they have negotiated. Conflicts can flare up if the company does not keep its promises.

Only the poorest farmers work regularly with companies, while the others prefer to cultivate their own land for subsistence purposes. Income generated by these jobs thus benefits the poorest (often migrant) workers, but this does not offer a viable pathway out of poverty. Low land rent and low wages are attractive conditions for investors but they substantially increase

▼ *Labourers employed by a private company.*



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the gap between the return on capital and on labour, and the differential between the added value that remains domestic and that is exported. In terms of social and spatial equity, these results should prompt a comparison with other development alternatives and business models (independent family farming, contract farming, large scale plantations, etc.).

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Forest management in family farming systems in Latin America

P. Sist © CIRAD



▲ *Small-scale logging by family farmers in the Brazilian Amazon (using a portable saw).*

In the Brazilian Amazon, it is estimated that family farmers hold 12 million ha of forest on their properties. The forest code requires that a 50-80% share of their properties be preserved as forest reserves. Farmers are allowed to tap these forest resources within the framework of State-approved forest management plans. Unfortunately, due to the lack of adoption of appropriate techniques, cleared plots quickly become infertile, and after a few years the properties are completely bare and the remaining pastures are not very productive. The farmers then often abandon their properties and move to other frontier areas where they apply the same land clearing strategy. Preserving forests on smallholdings while improving farmers' living standards is a huge challenge necessitating a radical change of practices.

Research conducted by CIRAD (UPR B&SEF) and partners in the Brazilian Amazon as part of the *Floresta e Agricultura* (FLOAGRI, European Union [EU]) and *Floresta em Pé* (FEP, International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD]) projects between 2005-2010 showed that logging, especially in the framework of a farmer-forest business partnership, can play a vital role in the development of sustainable

farming systems because timber sales generate primary income that may be invested in sustainable, environmentally intensive farming systems. However, these models could not be widely used without public policies to support the implementation of enhanced technical interventions and the development of sustainable farm forestry. In close relationship with logging, payments for environmental services and offset markets offer an alternative financial source for the development of sustainable farming systems while also combating poverty. The INVALUABLE and PESMIX* projects of the French National Research Agency (ANR) assess the impact of these instruments in family farming systems in Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Mexico. These payments may be provided in cash, as in Mexico, or be in the form of an agricultural and forestry investment plan, as in Guatemala, Costa Rica and Brazil.

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* INVALUABLE project (2012-2015): Integrating assessments, markets and policies for biodiversity and ecosystem services
PESMIX project (2011-2014): Payments for environmental services: new panacea or auxiliary for environmental management?