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**How and why large-scale  
agricultural land  
investments do not create  
long-term employment  
benefits**

A critique of the 'state' of labour  
regulations in Ghana



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# The Labour Question in Land Deals



Dispossession-centred



Labour issues remained at the margins for a very long time

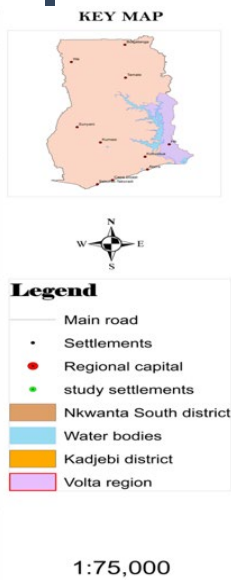
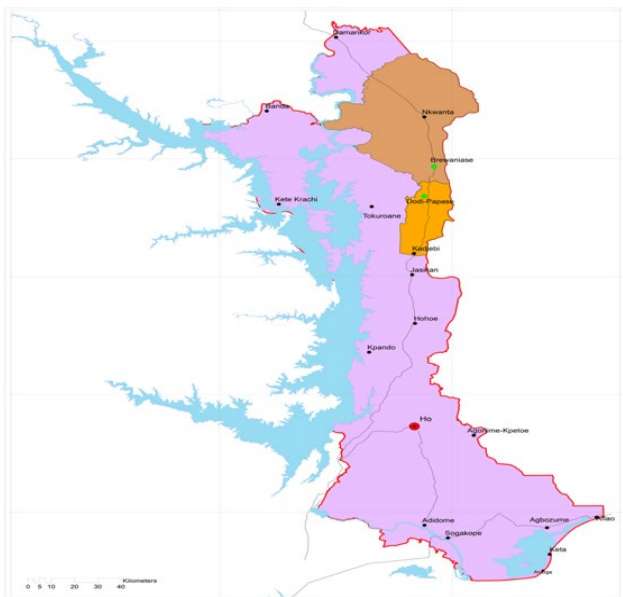


Most land deals are in their implementation stages and require both land and Labour



Surplus labour  
Terms of incorporation

# Study Approach



Reviewed national and international legal and policy documents, including Ghana's Labour Act and the Voluntary land deal guidelines, to contextualise findings.

Fieldwork in Ghana (February 2018 – February 2020- a period of six months)

Observed working conditions on the farm and engaged with diverse affected groups

Qualitative-dominant mixed methods, including surveys with 200 farmworkers, interviews with 80 individuals, and FGD

# The Governance Tendencies for Large Agricultural Investments

	STOP/ROLL BACK	MITIGATE IMPACTS	FACILITATE ACCUMULATION
<b>Assumptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dispossession</li> <li>• Unsustainable</li> <li>• Not our kind of agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inevitable</li> <li>• Poor policy support to small-scale agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investments desirable</li> <li>• Productivity</li> <li>• <b>win-win-win</b></li> </ul>
<b>Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Radical</li> <li>• Expose and Oppose</li> <li>• Alternatives: Agroecology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progressive</li> <li>• <b>Human Rights</b></li> <li>• Best Practices</li> <li>• <b>Consultation</b></li> <li>• Environ. Protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical and Administrative</li> <li>• <b>Transparent Markets</b></li> <li>• Property Rights</li> <li>• Efficiency</li> </ul>
<b>Actors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agrarian Environ. Justice</li> <li>• Food sovereignty etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some INGOs and Think Tanks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Finance organisations</li> </ul>
<b>Narrative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land grabs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land Deals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Largescale land Investments</li> </ul>

# Facilitate Accumulation & Mitigate Impacts

- Unless vast numbers of jobs are created, or a global basic income grant is devised to redistribute the wealth ... land deals are firmly rejected. *Li 2011*
- If properly executed, considering gender dimensions, ..can be transformative through employment and income generation.. (*Behrman, et al 2012*)
- Methodologically challenging: Land use change visible in the short term, - labour impacts may only materialise at later stages- *Oya (2013), Cotula et al (2014)*
- For most Voluntary Guidelines (VGGT, FAO 2012)
  - Transparency on land, jobs and returns/profits
  - Consultation on community job needs
  - Sharing business plans
  - win- win -win



# The Regulatory Framework for Labour In Ghana

- Ghana's labour framework, rooted in the Constitution, includes key laws such as the Labour Act (2003) and Labour Regulations (2007), which protect vulnerable groups' working conditions and rights, along with the Persons with Disability Act and Workmen's Compensation Act.
  - Human rights
  - Occupational Welfare Health and Safety
  - Unionisation
  - Equal Pay & Minimum Wage
- The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations oversees governance with policies like the 2015 National Employment Policy, emphasising job creation, employment quality, and labour productivity in a decentralised structure.
- Community/Investor Guidelines for Large-Scale Land Transactions by MoA in 2015.
- VGGT

# 1. Job creation rhetoric under a laissez-faire investment environment



- **No Hard Laws** requiring employment creation on transnational farms, leading to unmet promises and weak investor accountability.
- **Unequal and limited job opportunities**, particularly for women, and plans for mechanisation threaten further job reductions.
- Investor incentives are prioritised over labour outcomes, leaving employment standards inadequately monitored.
- **Community Disillusionment** with unfulfilled job expectations, while vague guidelines emphasise participatory consultation over addressing power dynamics and employment as a right.
- **Investor discretion** and goodwill

## 2. Institutional Bypassing of Agricultural Workers

- **Exclusion from Labour Protections:** Ghana's labour laws, including the Labour Act, 2003 (Act 651), exclude agricultural workers, prioritise investors' interests, and leave farmworkers marginalised, with limited protections for casual and temporary workers. *It includes casual work but excludes pieceworkers, part-time workers, sharecroppers, etc.*
- **Precarious Working Conditions:** Plantation work features insecure contracts, seasonal layoffs, and a high reliance on casual labour (70%), disproportionately affecting women (90% of casual workers). Inadequate occupational health and safety measures expose workers to significant risks. *Factory-centred health-safety laws.*
- **Operational and Logistical Challenges:** Labour institutions with overlapping roles face staffing shortages, logistical constraints, and vulnerability to political interference; the *Department of Factories Inspectorate and Labour Commission have overlapping mandates and inadequate focus on agricultural labour*



### 3. Legitimation of Status Quo and Repression

- Minimum wage regulations upheld- 50% higher
- Equal pay?
- Right to Unionize?
- But is < \$3 Living Wage?
- Gendered dimensions- wages opportunities and contracts
- Fear, misinformation, persuasion, remoteness, and differentiated livelihood



# Conclusions

- **Gaps in Labour Governance:** Ghana's regulatory framework marginalizes agricultural workers, with public sector and industry-focused policies excluding farmworkers, legitimizing inequality rather than protecting vulnerable groups.
- **Need for Agriculture-Specific Reforms:** Effective labour protections require agriculture-specific legislations, secure legal rights for farmworkers, and substantial policy reforms, including amending labour commission mandates and conducting rural labour market research.
- **Empowering Farmworkers:** Enhancing workers' access to education, legal rights, and unionization processes is vital. Collaborations between NGOs, cooperatives, and unions can improve leadership training and advocacy in rural contexts.
- **Addressing Structural Inequalities:** Labour policies should consider the root causes of land transfers, such as farmers' lack of resources, societal norms, and discriminatory agricultural policies, which constrain choices and reinforce dependence on precarious wage labour.
- **Global and Local Advocacy:** International institutions like the ILO can support closing the regulatory vacuum, but local measures must address information asymmetries, gendered inequalities, and rural power dynamics for truly beneficial investments.



Thank you