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Sacrificing the peasants: Land grabbing and food security in Igalaland, North-Central Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the multifaceted phenomenon of land grabbing, encircling both forcible takeovers without due process and acquisitions with owners' consent but lacking fulfillment of compensation and resettlement requirements. It also interrogates the underlying motives and consequences of large-scale land takeovers, particularly in poor and developing countries, under the guise of sustainable development. The paper adopts the historical research method through the utilization of primary and secondary sources and rural sociology. Through an analysis of various perspectives, including those of scholars like Samir Amin and Patrick Bond, and fieldwork, this paper, elucidates how land grabs disrupt rural societies and production processes, leading to a concentration of land ownership in the hands of corporations at the expense of indigenous occupiers. In addendum, the paper highlights the intricate relationship between land tenure, food security, and governmental policies, emphasizing the historical and contemporary significance of land in shaping societal dynamics. It concludes by underscoring the need for a comprehensive understanding of the socioeconomic and political factors driving land grabs to address the complex challenges they pose to equitable development and food security.

Keywords: Land grabbing, food Security, Igalaland

Introduction

Land is unarguably an indisputable factor of development. It is central to development because it anchors transformation. The centrality of land to development has made it vital to developed, developing, and underdeveloped nations. This explains the search and contestation for land between rural societies and advanced economies. Between the last two decades of the 20th and the first decade of the 21st centuries, both the developed and developing economies along with their Multinational Companies (MNCs) have continued to peep for spheres with vast lands with weak administrative and legal

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frameworks for their expanding economies. This has, however, become problematic due to the nature and status of land in most underdeveloped societies especially in Africa.

Land in most parts of Africa, is seen as an intricate determinant of survival thus, making land issues complex and conflict-ridden.[1] This could be attributable to the mistaken understanding of the existing forests in Africa and Nigeria. This is because, the large availability of land and forest in Nigeria has been mistaken as waste, unused, and underutilized lands. At times, the majority of the land often referred to as 'wasteland or unutilized lands in Nigeria are mostly sacred lands whose sacredness is believed to be central to the identity, solidarity, and peace of certain communities. According to the World Bank, 'the ownership of land facilitates access to credit, gives the poor more voice in the political arena, contributes to higher investments in children's education and arrests the inter-generational transfer of poverty'.[2] This corroborates Attah's position that land especially in Nigeria is the bridge between the past, present, and future generations.[3] This submission is vital to understanding the centrality of land to Nigerian society. In Nigeria, the livelihoods of the peasants and the rural dwellers are structurally tied to their capacity to access their lands and their natural resources.[4]The majority of the rural dwellers in Nigeria see sustainability in the ability of each household to provide for the basic demands of its members, and thus, lens development through the quantity and quality of their harvest. All these, are key to what they see as sustainable development. Regardless of this, there has been an upscale demand for large land by both local and foreign investors in Africa and Nigeria since the dawn of the 21st century. These are not without serious implications for the rural dwellers and peasants.

The surge for land in developing countries has been on the increase since 2007.[5] According to Vermeulen and Cotula, the scramble for land in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to mention a few, was attributable to the high food prices at the global market, the boom in bio fuels, and food security.[6] This was further

[1]LechesaTsenoli, "Agrarian Relations in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Communist Viewpoint,"*Review of Agrarian Studies*,(2013): pp 114-115

[2] World Bank 2005. Cited in Yasin and Franklin. 2012. Conventions, Changes and Land governance in Africa…..60

[3]Attah, N.E.,"Tiptoeing in the minefields: possession by dispossession and land grabbing in Nigeria", An Inaugural Lecture delivered at Joseph Ayo Babalola University, IkejiArakeji, Osun State on Thursday, 28th April, 2016. 9

[4] Maura Andrew, Andrew Ainslie and Charlie Shackleton,*Evaluating Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa.* An Occasional Paper Series. (South Africa: Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), 2003),p 2.

[5]Dauvergne, Peter and Neville, Kate J,"Forests, food, and fuel in the tropics: the uneven social and ecological consequences of the emerging political economy of biofuels",*Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37, 4, (2010): p 631.

[6]Vermeulen, Sonja and Cotula, Lorenzo, "Over the Heads of Local People: Consultation, Consent, and Recompense in Large-Scale Land Deals for Biofuels Projects in Africa",*Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37: 4, (2010):p 900.
Also see.. Franco, Jennifer ,Levidow, Les , Fig, David , Goldfarb, Lucia , Hönicke, Mireille and Luisa Mendonça, Maria, "Assumptions in the European Union Biofuels Policy: Frictions with Experiences in Germany, Brazil and Mozambique",*Journal of Peasant Studies*. 37: 4, (2010): p 661.

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heightened by the European Union's renewable fuel target of 10% utilization of Biofuel by 2010. The urge to actualize this target significantly triggered the quest for large-scale land investment and acquisition in Africa.[7]The World Bank's 2008 World Development Report, for instance, emphasized the importance of the 'new agriculture' agenda, which was aimed at promoting a dynamic and efficient agribusiness as a means to stimulate agricultural growth and development in many regions. To achieve this objective, agricultural practices were to be further modernized with improved value chains that would,in the long run, integrate the peasants (smallholder farmers) into commercial agriculture with the view of increasing productivity and reducing poverty.[8] This presupposes that the rush for land in developing countries was part of a broader effort to transform traditional agriculture into a more market-oriented and economically sustainable sector.

On the contrary, experiences from Latin America, Asia, and Africa have shown that large-scale land accumulation may create new opportunities for local livelihoods and national economies. Still, it may also render a large number of people economically incapacitated as a result of the changes in land use and livelihood.[9] This was anchored on the argument that large accumulation of land for foreign agro-investments creates direct risks of loss of land, water, and natural resources for local people, and this in turn, could have a major repercussion for local food security, particularly given the high level of dependence on natural resources for food security in many rural societies in Africa.[10] Thus, within the economic and social setups of the third world nations, 'land ownership and uses', especially among traditional producers is not just a source of livelihood but a symbol of identity, dignity, solidarity, and peace.[11] This cosmology is contrary to the perception of the Multinational companies, developed and developing nations, who see the forest and land as articles of business or trade in contrast to the African cosmology that the forest and land are everything[12]. To the Africans, land represents a source of good health - medicine, culture, and spirituality.[13] This sums up the social, cultural, and to some extent political makeup of land and its uses in Africa and Nigeria to be precise.

In Nigeria, Kwara, Taraba, Cross River, and Kogi States were among the major states to have experienced the challenges of land grabbing. In Kogi State for

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[7] Lorenzo Cotula and Sonja Vermeulen, "Deal or No Deal: The Outlook for Agricultural Land Investment in Africa",*International Affairs*, 85, 6, (2010):p 1236.
[8] McCarthy, John F,"Processes of Inclusion and Adverse Incorporation: Oil Palm and Agrarian Change in Sumatra, Indonesia",*Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37, 4, (2009): 821
[9]Vermeulen, Sonja and Cotula, Lorenzo, "Over the Heads of Local People: Consultation, Consent, and Recompense in Large-Scale Land Deals for Biofuels Projects in Africa",*Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37: 4, (2010):p 900.
[10]Ibid., p 903.
[11]YasinAbdalaEltayebElHaary and Franklin ben-Odoom,"Conventions, Changes and Land Governance in Africa: The Story of Land Grabbing in North Sudan and Ghana",*African Today*, 59, 2 (2012):p 59.
[12] Ellen Aabo and Thomas Kring,*The Political Economy of Large-Scale Agricultural Land Acquisitions: Implications for Food Security and Livelihood/Employment Creation in Rural Mozambique*. WP-004. Regional Bureau for Africa. (2012), p 8.
[13]AnabelaLemos. 2016. Mozambique's movement to end land grabs. Retrieved from www.otherworldsarepossible.org , accessed on 07/04/2016

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example, about 40,450 ha of arable land was taken away from the farmers in Ibaji, Itobe, and Acharuall in Igalaland and Central Nigeria for the production of Sugar, Palm trees, and Tomato plantations.[14] In as much as the quest for the takeover of the lands was tagged as a move to bring sustainable development to the state, little or no attention was often given to the livelihood of the farmers and what the takeover of the land would cause the various markets and societies that depends on the farming communities for agricultural produce. It is however, against this problem that this research interrogates the implication of large takeover of arable land on the local communities and the food chain in the area about the assumption that large acquisition of land in any society constitutes the substitution of the rural or peasant's food security and economy for foreign interests and economies at the detriment of local markets and consumption.

Conceptualising land grabbing and food security

Land Grabbing

Land grabbing constitutes either the forceful takeover of lands without due process or the acquisition of land with the owners' consent without fulfilling other obligations like the payment of compensation, resettlement, and the provision of the agreed facilities after the takeover. The real nature of land grab could be better understood through the workings of possession by dispossession.[15] It implies the systemic disengagement of rural farmers from their lands under the guise of transferring the right of such land to multinational companies or institutions without providing compensation, resettlement, and the agreed facilities that would aid the resettlement of the disengaged farmers. This paper sees the large takeover of land in poor and developing countries as a direct consequence of the neoliberal capitalist policies that result in the centralization of wealth and power in the hands of a few by dispossessing the public and private entities of their wealth or land.[16] According to Harvey, these neoliberal policies are guided majorly by four pillars – privatization, financialization, management and manipulation of crises, and state redistributions. The concept is concerned with the undertones that are behind the accumulation of land by multinational corporations. In addition to this, the model further interrogated some of the challenges that have over time given the large takeover of land a confusing and lopsided status.

Samir Aminin his book '*Ending the Crisis of Capitalism or Ending Capitalism'* further advanced the basic underpinnings of land grabs. To Samir Amin, private appropriation of agrarian land, the subordination of agricultural production to the requirements of the market, and, the continuing and accelerating expulsion of the peasant population for the benefit of a small number of capitalist farmers,

[14] Laz Etemike and Omokiniovo Harriet Efanodor,"Contemporary globalization and the rural economy in Nigeria",*American InternationalJournal of Social Science*, 4, 3, (2015): p 18. see NAN. Feb., 27th, 2015. Kogi State to create 5,000 jobs through oil palm sector. Retrieved from www.nannewsningeria.com/node/37715 on 05-04-2016 , accessed on 05-04-2016

[15]Harvey David, *The New Imperialism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003),p 138.

[16]Ibid.,p 138.

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who are not peasants, are the intrinsic attributes of historical capitalism.[17]He averred that land grabs had over time, compromised the rural sociology and production process in the study areas. Amin all through his analysis did not discuss how a large takeover of land constitutes an economic process. This dark reality was captured by Harvey, where he described accumulation by dispossession as 'a purely economic process, with its most important phase- a transaction between the capitalist and the wage laborer'.[18] This was premised on the fact that the accumulation of capital is linked with the relations between capitalism and the non-capitalist modes of production which starts marking their appearance on the international stage.[19] To Attah for instance, the investment in land and dispossessions spawned the concentration of land ownership in the hands of corporations at the expense of the indigenous occupiers.[20]Attah's view was premised on a critical review of governmental approaches to Agro-fuel and agro-investment in Nigeria. This was because the concession and leasing of large land to foreign investors in Nigeria amounts to the adoption of a global trend that does not translate to developmental benefits for Nigerian farmers and the rural population.[21]Attah observes that land deals and agro-investments in Nigeria were often done without considering the centrality of land to the peasants and the society at large. This was in line with Yasin and Franklin's submission that 'the ownership and uses of land, especially among traditional producers is not just a source of livelihood but a symbol of identity, dignity, solidarity and peace'.[22] As earlier advanced by Vermeulen and Cotula, land in Africa, as elsewhere, has important spiritual and social values, thus, making purely economic calculations unlikely to capture local perceptions about proposed land deals.[23] This was why Attah in his Inaugural Lecture posited that land is the bridge between the past, present, and future generations in Nigeria[24] but to the multinational corporations or agro-investors and developed nations, the forest and land in Nigeria are only for business.[25] To them, land and water in Africa are increasingly perceived as sources of

[17] Samir Amin,*Ending the crisis of capitalism or ending capitalism?*(Dakar: Pambazuka Press, 2011)p 56.
[18]Harvey David, *The New Imperialism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003),p 137
[19]Ibid.,p 137.
[20]Attah, N.E. 2016. Tiptoeing in the minefields: possession by dispossession and land grabbing in Nigeria. An inaugural lecture delivered at Joseph Ayo Babalola University, IkejiArakeji, Osun State on Thursday, 28th April, 2016. 9
[21]Attah, N.E. 2015. Nigerian agro-fuels policy and land grabs: "monkey see monkey do". A paper presented at CODESRIA at 14 : Creating African futures in an era of global transformations: challenges and prospects, Dakar, Senegal, 08-12 June, 2015. 3
[22]YasinAbdalaEltayebElHaary and Franklin ben-Odoom,"Conventions, changes and land governance in Africa: the story of land grabbig in North Sudan and Ghana"*African Today*, 59, 2 (2012): p 59.
[23]Vermeulen, Sonja and Cotula, Lorenzo, "Over the Heads of Local People: Consultation, Consent, and Recompense in Large-Scale Land Deals for Biofuels Projects in Africa",*Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37: 4, (2010):p 900.
[24]Attah, N.E. 2016. Tiptoeing in the minefields: possession by dispossession and land grabbing in Nigeria. 9
[25]AnabelaLemos. 2016. Mozambique's movement to end land grabs. Retrieved from www.otherworldsarepossible.org , accessed on 07/04/2016

alternative energy production (primarily biofuels), food crops, mineral deposits (new and old), and reservoirs of environmental services.[26]

Be that as it may, the land question and large possession of land in Nigeria is more or less an uneven and combined development. Uneven development is more applicable to the Nigerian and African scenario. To Patrick Bond, growth (accumulation) and decline (underdevelopment through super-exploitation) happen systematically, but not one which follows either the modernization path directly along a line of underdevelopment, "take-off", and development or permanent dependency.[27] What happens is accumulation at one pole and poverty at another happen systematically according to processes as dictated by political policies and class. Patrick Bond's concern was further stressed by Jacqueline Klopp and Odenda Lumuba in their study on 'Kenya and the Global land grab: A view from below'. The authors averred that the 'global land grabbing' – the acquisition or long-term lease of land in Africa, Asia, and Latin America by investors was attributable to the food crisis in 2007/2008. Using Kenya as a study, they opined that following the food crisis in 2007/8, several new large-scale foreign investments in land-based enterprises emerged in the fertile Tana River Delta.[28] This according to the authors was made possible by the protectorate and colonial administrations in the country whose system of land governance privileged access to land for the colonial state projects and a narrow band of foreign citizens, companies, and investors. This did not, however, change in the postcolonial era. This was because the local elite who were expected to restructure the land policy, further consolidated their power and position through the exploitation of the unreformed laws and the existing administrative system and practice around land.[29] As a result of this, the land system, continued to favor centralized and unaccountable control over land, allowing politically connected actors to accumulate and speculate in land, all the while continuing a history of marginalization and dispossession of the poorer groups in the society.

Food Security

Food production and its availability are mostly attributable to government policies and natural features. The problems of food shortages and famine that characterized the history of Nigeria in the 1900s, for instance, could be better understood within the context of government policies and their attendant effects.[30]Before the 19th century, food insecurity was occasioned by either

[26]Borras Jr., SaturninoM. , Hall, Ruth , Scoones, Ian , White, Ben and Wolford, Wendy,"Towards a Better Understanding of Global Land Grabbing: An Editorial Introduction"*Journal of Peasant Studies*. 38: 2, (2011):p 209.
[27]Patrick Bond. Accumulation by Dispossession in Africa: False Diagnoses and Dangerous Prescriptions. 3
[28]Jacqueline M. Klopp and OdendaLumuba,"Kenya and the 'Global land Grab': a View from Below". MaykeKaag and AnneliesZoomers (Eds.) *The Global Land Grab: Beyond the Hype*. (Canada: Fernwood Publishing, 2014), p 54.
[29]Ibid., p 54.
[30] Wale Oyemakinde,"The Pullen Marketing Scheme: A Trial in Food Price Control in Nigeria, 1941-1947"*,Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*,VI, 4, (1973): p 416.

natural causes or war.[31] Thus, understanding food security in any part of the world demands an examination of the particular driving force that dictated all aspects of the political economy such as the structure of the land rights, capacity to develop and utilize natural resources, population cropping pattern, and marketing.[32] In British-controlled Nigeria for example, food security was an all-important aspect of the economy from 1900- 1960.[33] It was one of the sectors that emphasized the dependent nature of the economy and the subordination of the interests of the indigenous inhabitants to the exigencies of the colonial economy.[34]

Food security is an indispensable component of human existence.[35] Its essence to human existence has over the years attracted government intervention and regulations from production to marketing.[36] These policies and attentions underline the significance of food to man and his society because man must eat to live and work to eat according to Ake.[37] Food security, for instance, is one of the determinants that have over time influenced settlement patterns and migration from time immemorial.[38] According to Udo, history is replete with human movements from a desiccating environment to areas that are better endowed with food resources.[39] The centrality of food to human societies and survival throughout human civilization has made man vulnerable to the consumption of both healthy and unhealthy substances during food shortages or hunger.[40] The importance of food goes beyond physical nourishment. It is, however, associated with enormous social, cultural, political, religious, and nutritional significance in most societies.[41]Food is associated with religious

[31] Louise Lennihan,"Critical Historical Conjunctures in the Emergence of Agricultural Wage Labour in Northern Nigeria",*Human Ecology*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1984): p 466.
[32]Mridula Mukherjee, *Colonializing Agriculture: The Myth of Punjab Exceptionalism,*(New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005). p xxv.
[33] Wale Oyemakinde,"The Pullen Marketing Scheme: A Trial in Food Price Control in Nigeria, 1941-1947",*Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*,VI, 4, (1973): p 413; also see AyodejiOlukoju, "Buy British, sell Foreign": External Trade Control Policies in Nigeria During World War II and its Aftermath, 1939-1950",*International Journal of African Historical Studies, 35, 2-3* (2002): p 363.
[34]Babatola, J.O. ,"A Review of the Gap between Political Will and Agricultural Policy Implementation", Joseph Atehnkeng, Nwigwe Cecilia, Agbicodo Eugene, Opoku Andrew, Obidiegwu Jude and Acha Ivo. (Eds.) *Sustainable Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Critical Look into the Constraints and Prospects. Proceedings of the 13th Annual Symposium of the International Association of Research Scholars and Fellows*,*(*Ibadan: International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, 2007), p 51.
[35]Michael Darkoh, B.K and Mohamed Ould-Mey,"Cash Crops Versus Food Crops in Africa: A Conflict Between Dependency and Autonomy",*Transafrican Journal of History*, 21, (1992): p 40.
[36]*Food Policy*,(Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 1981), p 10.
[37] Claude Ake,*A Political Economy of Africa*,(Nigeria: Longman Nigeria Plc, 1981)p 1.
[38] Udo, R, K,"Environments and Peoples of Nigeria: A Geographical Introduction to the History of Nigeria",ObaroIkime (Ed.),*Groundwork of Nigerian History*,(Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc, 1980), p 1.
[39]Ibid., p 1
[40] Joan P. Alcock,*Food in the Ancient World*,(London: Greenwood Press, 2006), p 227.
[41]Michel P. Pimbert, John Thompson and William T. Vorley, Tom Fox, Nazneen Kanji and CiciliaTacoli,"Global Restructuring, Agri-Food Systems and Livelihoods...4

beliefs and traditional practices.[42] This presupposes that food aside from its nutritional essence is also linked with the historicity of human societies and beliefs.[43] Sequel to these interrelated nexuses, food production, processing, distribution, and marketing account for over half of all the labor expended globally.[44]

It should be noted at this junction that food security is the end product of the distillation between food policy and the system. The concept revolves around food production, consumption, processing, chains of distribution, and the implications of the above on food availability and the economy at large. It is succinctly tied to the multifarious effects of the government's regulations on food.[45] This is because agriculture and food production globally take place within a political milieu. This underlines the effects of government policies and the idiosyncrasies of political leaders on food and food prices.[46] This implies that food production is not purely sharpened by economic undertones alone but is a blend between politics and economic undertones. It is in line with this that food security entails an interrogation of the set of actions and relationships that interact to determine what, how, by what method, and for whom food is produced.[47] It is a subsection of the overall complex set of operations and transformation of inputs which ultimately results in the availability of food to consumers. At times, food security is often referred to as the food system, food chain, or food sector as the case may be. All these, are broadly synonymous with each other because policies introduced in the food economy can have multiple effects on other sectors of the economy, and policies directed at other sectors of the economy as a whole can also have marked effects on the food economy.[48]

According to Geir Lieblein *et al*, the status of agricultural production was transformed from a local phenomenon into a global article of trade and appropriation sequel to the accompanying effects of the Industrial Revolution, colonialism, and the great economic depression.[49] The authors argued that with the Industrial Revolution and the increasing demands for foodstuffs in industrial areas, the role of food was thus transformed from being a local product into a global commodity. As a result of this, different chains of distribution emerged and created an increased food movement.[50] This in the long run created a wider distance between food producers and consumers. The

[42]Joan P. Alcock,*Food in the Ancient World*,(London: Greenwood Press, 2006), p 218
[43] Sidney Mintz, W and Christine Du Bois, M,"The Anthropology of Food and Eating", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31, (2002): p 104
[44]Michel P. Pimbert, John Thompson and William T. Vorley, Tom Fox, Nazneen Kanji and CiciliaTacoli. 2001. Global Restructuring, Agri-Food Systems and Livelihoods...4
[45] Ray Bush,"The Politics of Food and Starvation",*Review of African Political Economy,* 23, 68, (1996), p 171.
[46]Ofuatey-Kodjeo, W and SakkievaEeden,"The Political Economy of Food Production in Africa", *International Journal on World Peace,* 7, 8, (1990): p 35.
[47]*Food Policy*,(Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 1981), p 10.
[48] Harriet Friedmann,"The Political Economy of Food: The Rise and Fall of the Postwar International Food Order",*American Journal of Sociology*, 88, (1982):p 248.
[49]GeirLieblein, Charles A. Francis and Hanne Torjusen,"Future Interconnections Among Ecological Farmers, Processors, Marketers, and Consumers in Hedmark County, Norway: Creating Shared Vision",*Human Ecology Review*, 8, 1, (2001): p 60.
[50]Ibid., p 60.

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Industrial Revolution midwifed the dependence of nonagricultural populations on agricultural societies. Aside from Europe and the Industrial Revolution, in pre-colonial Nigerian societies, the production and distribution of foodstuffs were vital economic processes. Production and distribution were considered as issues of social importance due to the strict and at times ritual controls associated with them.[51] To Amadi, agricultural production in pre-colonial Nigerian society was carefully tailored to meet societal needs as dictated by social and ecological circumstances. Amadi affirmed that production was strictly controlled within the demands of domestic consumption and the exchange pattern in society.[52]

Jay O'Brien in a study demonstrated how the connections between government policies and political idiosyncrasies could affect the state of food either positively or negatively.[53] Jay's central submission was that both government policies and the political idiosyncrasies of leaders could deplete the availability of food even in a food-producing area by creating an artificial and transitory food crisis. The author averred that despite the drought and famine that devastated the Sahelian countries and Ethiopia in the 1960s and 1970s, Sudan was left relatively untouched, not as a result of favorable rainfall but the pattern of agricultural development in Sudan which was based on the expansion of food production for internal markets rather than export.[54] In the same study, the author revealed that in the later part of the 1970s, Sudan however, became trapped in the web of food crisis due to the intrusion of the Breton Woods family and other external influences like the Arab world on agricultural production in Sudan.[55] This implicitly revealed how government policies and other factors could influence food security or insecurity.

According to Tanya, the thrust of food security lies in the assessment of how households gain access to food in both normal and bad years coupled with the influence of shocks on food and its accessibility.[56] It critiques how households normally obtain food with cash [income] and their relative connections with the market and social networks. Studies have shown that most rural communities despite being the major producers of food are not food-secured. Lucy explained that the appropriation of food from the rural areas for the interests of the urban or metropolitan economies and industries has in no small measure instigated hunger and poverty in the rural areas.[57] According to Fisher, rural communities have been and are increasingly being affected by changes in the national and

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[51]Amadi, I.R, "Society, Production and Distribution in Precolonial South Eastern Nigeria", *Arica: RivistaTrimestrale di Studi e Documentazionedell'IstitutoItaliano per l'Africa e l'Oriente,* 55, 3. (2000): p 398.
[52]Ibid., p 399
[53]Jay O'Brien,"Sowing the Seeds of Famine: The Political Economy of Food Deficits in Sudan", *Review of African Political Economy*, 33, (1985):p 24.
[54]Ibid., p 24.
[55]Ibid., p 24.
[56]Tanya Boudreau,*The Food Economy Approach: A Framework for Understanding Rural Livelihoods*. Relief and Rehabilitation Network (RRN) 26,(London: Overseas Development Institute, 1998), p 7.
[57] Lucy Jarosz,"The Political Economy of Global Governance and the World Food Crisis: The Case of the FAO",*Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 32, 1,Political Economic Perspectives on the World Food Crisis, (2009): 37

world economies with little capacity to react.[58] Although smallholders account for the majority of the food produced globally, they are not food-secured[59] due to the complexity and dynamics of the supply system of food; poverty, and government policies. Robert in his study of the sustainable food system averred that even though plenty of food is produced globally they often fail to get to those in need of it due to the nature and dimensions of the global food economy and politics.[60] All these are signs that there is a link between state policies, food consumption, prices, and scarcity.[61]

Land Grabbing in Central Nigeria and the Question of Sustainable Development

The concession of large tracts of land in Ibaji is such that poses a serious question to sustainable (agricultural) development which has often been claimed to be one of the accompanying benefits of agro and agro-fuel investments in the third world. This is attributed to the long-term effects of large land concessions as earlier illuminated in the works of Amin who argued that the impact of large land concessions can better be measured through the effects of such dispossession on the population whose lands are under grab. The case of Ibaji demands a study because 90% of the population depends on access to land for their livelihood. This land is often subjected to periodic flooding. This is significant in the sense that the quality and quantity of the farm produce in Ibaji depends on the volume of the flood that comes each year and as such, the rush for arable flooded plains in Ibaji for sugarcane production ensues a critical competition between the food crops in Ibaji and agro-fuel.

The suitability of the network of the land in Ibaji for the production of sugar cane which is a major crop for the agro-fuel investment in the area is such that have put Ibaji land up for grabs. The concession of about 32, 000 ha[62] of land in Ibaji for the production of sugarcane by the Kogi State government through the Confluence Sugar Company Limited jeopardized the livelihood of the people. The Company was formed through a partnership between the United States of America-based oil company, the International Trans Oil and Gas Company, and its Nigerian counterpart, the International Trans Oil Nigeria Limited.[63] The company was situated on a 32,000-hectare of land in Ibaji with an in-built

[58] Dennis U. Fisher,"Agriculture's Role in a New Rural Coalition", *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 529, (1993): p 103.
[59]Roger Hay, W, "The Concept of Food Supply System with Special Reference to the Management of Famine", John Robson, R.K. (Ed.) *Famine: Its Causes, Effects and Management*,(New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishersm, 1981), p 81.
[60]Robert Beil, *Sustainable Food Systems: The role of the City*, (London: UCL Press, 2016), p 5-6.
[61] Harriet Friedmann,"The Political Economy of Food: The Rise and Fall of the Postwar International Food Order", p 248.
[62]N9.7b Petroluem, Sugar Refineries take off. *The Nation*. Retrieved from www.thenationonlineng.net/n9-7b-petroluen-sugar-refineries-take-off/amp/ accessed ib 10/07/2020
[63]BoldwinAnugwara. Confluence Sugar Partner's Big Group on N77 bn Project. 23 September, 2013. *Daily Newswatch*. Retrieved from www.mydailynewswatchng.com/2013/09/23confluence-sugar-partners-big-group-n77bn-project/ accessed on 10/07/2020

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10,000 metric tonnes of sugar refinery.[64] Hence, the Ibaji Sugar plantation was birthed through the memorandum of understanding signed between the Confluence Sugar Company Limited and the Big Group to build, operate, and manage the plantation in the area. The principal implication of the establishment of the company in Ibaji was the deprivation of peasant farmers of the land upon which they depended for survival. This is contrary to the fact that Nigerian society is largely made up of rural communities where land and natural resources are the important productive factors.[65] The concession of peasant farming lands for agro-fuel investment in Ibaji is akin to the implementation of the policies of globalization under the direction of the World Bank, IMF, and the WTO.[66] These investments have restructured the economy of rural areas in communities because they reinforce the agrarian character of the rural economy, encouraging the commercialization and privatization of land and its resources.[67] This development is often made possible by the government under the dictates of the Land Use Act of 1978 in acquiring large expanses of land which in the long run results in land grabbing.[68] The development in Ibaji is aligned with Attah's argument that increases in investment in land and dispossessions spawned the concentration of land ownership in the hands of corporations at the expense of the indigenous occupiers.

Just like Ibaji, a similar development occurred at Itobe where about 400 farmers were dispossessed of their farms without little or any compensation.[69] The dispossession of the vulnerable farmers at Itobe of about 450 hectares of their land was backed by the claim that it would engender sustainable development, whereas, on the contrary, this concession in reality only goes on to multiply the number of small peasants who have become near-landless and absolute-landless and sometimes excluded from agricultural activity as in the case of the Ibaji peasants whose lands are now been planted with Sugarcane instead of rice and yam.[70] In Itobe for instance, the Cinafinder Company Limited, the manufacturers of the Kogi Super Cement failed to compensate the natives whose land was given to the company with the agreement that the natives will be compensated and be provided with basic amenities like water and jobs. The fact that the land was transferred to the company through the state government played a major role in limiting the natives from protesting. According to the King of Itobe, the company promised to compensate the peasants who

[64]N9.7b Petroluem, Sugar Refineries take off. *The Nation*. Retrieved from www.thenationonlineng.net/n9-7b-petroluen-sugar-refineries-take-off/amp/ accessed on 10/07/2020

[65] Laz Etemike and Omokiniovo Harriet Efanodor,"Contemporary globalization and the rural economy in Nigeria",*American International Journal of Social Science*, 4, 3, (2015): p 18.

[67]Ibid., p 18.

[68]Ibid., p 18.

[69]Attah, N.E. 2016. Tiptoeing in the minefields: possession by dispossession and land grabbing in Nigeria. An inaugural lecture delivered at Joseph Ayo Babalola University, IkejiArakeji, Osun State on Thursday, 28th April, 2016,P80.

[70]Attah, N.E. 2015. Nigerian agro-fuels policy and land grabs: "monkey see monkey do". A paper presented at CODESRIA at 14 : Creating African futures in an era of global transformations: challenges and prospects, Dakar, Senegal, 08-12 June, 2015,p 1.

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depended on the land before the arrival of the company.[71] This was never paid. This was in addition to the promise to construct five boreholes for the community in addition to the construction of a standard clinic for the people of Itobe a new palace for the Ogohi of Allo and scholarships to natives in China. According to the king, none of these agreements were adhered to. It was gathered that the peasants were not paid their compensation because the state government which is a critical stakeholder in the company was responsible for providing the compensation as part of its share in the company. It is instructive to note that none of the agreements saw the light of the day.According to the community liaison officer, aside from the failure of the company and the state government to honor the signed agreement, when the company was producing, the community and other neighborhoods within the 25 radius of the company suffered heavy environmental pollution due to the dust and acidity from the company.[72] It was reported that the king reported the company to the Kogi State Investment Company – the supervising agency that was saddled with the responsibility of managing the state's share in the company. Until the period that the company folded up in 2022, the natives were not compensated.[73]

Apart from the implication of this concession on the peasant population, the surrounding markets that depend on the produce from Ibaji are also affected by the grab. Surrounding markets like Idah, Ejule, and Onitsha markets depend on the Ibaji farmers for yam, rice, and fish to be specific[74] but with the concession of about 32, 000 ha of land in Ibaji for agro-fuel, the produce leaving Ibaji for these markets are seriously dwindling. This is because the land in question was not land under fallow or underutilized lands as often advanced but arable lands under the use of the villagers. The argument that large tracts of land abound in Ibaji may facially be acceptable but the fact remains that a very large portion of the lands available in the area are occupied by water bodies. The practical expression of what has happened in Ibaji can be summed up as a situation of 'food versus fuel'. A good portion of the land under-grab forms part of the arable lands used for local food production.[75] It is on record that Ibaji and Idah local governments in Kogi State produce about 20% of the Yam consumed in Nigeria.[76] However, the contribution of Ibaji to the sustainability of food security cannot be easily sidestepped because the record exists that 40% of the foodstuff in Kogi State along with fishes and aquatic animals comes from the

[71]Oral interview with HRH, Alh. SalifuAdajiOcho, the Onu/District Head of Itobe, age: 60+ at Itobe, on 03-05-2022
[72]Oral interview with Mr. Adams Abuh, the Community Liason Officer to Cinafinder Company Limited, the Manufacturer of Kogi Super Cement in Itobe, age: 50+ at Itobe, on 04-05-2022
[73]Oral interview with HRH, Alh. Salifu Adaji Ocho, the Onu/District Head of Itobe, age: 60+ at Itobe, on 03-05-2022
[74] Oral interview with Udokwu Gabriel, age: 60 at Ejule Ojebe, Ibaji L.G.A on 03-05-2016
[75]Attah, N.E. 2015. Nigerian agro-fuels policy and land grabs: "monkey see monkey do". A paper presented at CODESRIA at 14 : Creating African futures in an era of global transformations: challenges and prospects, Dakar, Senegal, 08-12 June, 2015,p 9.
[76] Kathryn Bergh, Patricia Orozco, Mary Kay Gugerty and Leigh Anderson, "Yam value chain: Nigeria",*Evans School Policy Analysis and Research (EPAR)*. EPAR Brief No. 207, (2012): p 15

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area under study.[77] The above presupposes that the pursuit of agro-fuel in Ibaji is such that compromises the food security of the state.

The critical question that begs for an answer in this work is how the concession of land in Ibaji will translate into sustainable development judging from the makeup or nature of agro-business. This is the sequel to the fact that the majority of the peasants in Ibaji lack the know-how to actively participate in agro-business other than filing the rank and files of messengers, gardeners, and security men. The knowledge of the above points to the fact that rather than leading to development, the concession of land in Ibaji at best will transform the independent farmers in the area into wage laborers on the farm, a situation which is contrary to sustainable development. This was captured by Attah who posits that the agro-fuel investments on African farmlands by international financial capital create false expectations as rural enclosures lead to the dispossession of farmers of their land and the benefits and that farmers are forced by their economic disadvantage into becoming agricultural laborers or proletarians.[78] It should however, be noted that the plantations or agro-business and industries of the 21st century lack the basic capacity to employ labor or workers like those of the 19th and 20th centuries due to the efficiency of machines and the advancement in technology.

This concern was experienced in Acharu Egume in the Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State where the majority of the farmers are increasingly been transformed into wage laborers having been dispossessed of their land despite the promise of sustainable development by the Kogi State Government.[79] In Acharu for instance, the concession of over 10,000 ha of land for palm tree plantation has rendered the majority of the farmers into landless and jobless individuals despite the claim by the State Government that the plantation will create 5,000 jobs for the inhabitants of Acharu.[80] The political argument in favor of this form of globalization lies in the assumption that the integration of all countries into the global economy will serve as a panacea to economic development and advancement. This correlates with the argument that the pursuit of agro-fuel in Nigeria occupies a unique and strategic position in the global agro-fuel experiment.[81] The argument is premised on the fact that Nigeria has long served as an arena for cheap raw materials and resources for the exploitation of foreign firms. Besides, the agricultural status of the country and its challenges of food insecurity are such that contradict the granting of concessions to foreign firms to possess lands and grow crops that are not meant for local consumption in the country. As a result of this, the issue of agro-fuels and land grabbing in Nigeria is not only interesting but a contradiction in itself.

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[77]Ukwuteno, S. O, Saliu, O.J and Audu, S.I,"Land crisis and poverty of farmers in the North Central Zone of Nigeria",*American-European Journal of Sustainable Agriculture*, 3, 3, (2009): p 342.

[78]Attah, N.E. 2016. Tiptoeing in the minefields: possession by dispossession and land grabbing in Nigeria. 19

[79] Oral interview with UseniYakubu, age: 50 at Egume, Dekina L.G.A on 29-03-2016

[80] NAN. Feb., 27th, 2015. Kogi State to create 5,000 jobs through oil palm sector. Retrieved from www.nannewsningeria.com/node/37715 on 05-04-2016 , accessed on 05-04-2016

[81]Attah, N.E. 2015. Nigerian agro-fuels policy and land grabs: "monkey see monkey do". A paper presented at CODESRIA at 14 : Creating African futures in an era of global transformations: challenges and prospects, Dakar, Senegal, 08-12 June, 2015,p 3.

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While it is understandable that some African countries like Mozambique have embraced agro-fuel production as a way of reducing dependence on fuel import, it is paradoxical for Nigeria, a leading oil-producing country to appropriate lands that were meant for staple crops for agro-fuel production. This, however, informs the assumption that Nigerian policy on Agro-fuels amounts to the adoption of a global trend that does not translate to developmental benefits for the people, especially, the dispossessed.[82]

Moreover, aside from the structural disengagement of peasants from their land, there exists a clandestine dimension to the politics of land grabs in the third world. It has been discovered that large land deals have been one of the secret conduit pipes through which international funds could be obtained. This is because access and evidence of ownership of large plots of land under the guise of agro investment have become the in thing. This trend is responsible for the incomplete nature of the majority of the agro-fuel projects in Nigeria. The sugarcane plantation in Ibaji serves as a good example. In Ibaji, not up to a quarter of the land grabbed has been planted with sugarcane whereas, the Certificate of Occupancy has been issued to the company, which by implication, has taken the right to the land from the natives without due consultation and the payment of compensations. This is even though Sterling Finance Canada has structured a $2b loan for the Sugar Company.[83] Despite the transfer of the ownership of the land to the company, the initial area cultivated by the company has become more or less axiomatic with land under fallow due to the abandoned nature of the project. The scenario in Ibaji is not different from that of Ejule, Itobe, and relatively Acharu. It is only in Acharu for instance, that agricultural activities are still going on in the potion of land grabbed.

The trajectories of the large land acquisition and its effects on the dislocation of the rural economy of some selected Igala communities were similar to the postulation of Etemike and Efanador who averred that land grabbing is an attribute of contemporary globalization with increasing rapid flow of capital under which the world economy is increasingly changing and these changes are undoubtedly affecting the nature of trade, the structure of the market and sustainability of the form of livelihood.[84] To them, the implication of this form of globalization for the rural economies is complex. Suffice it to mention that the increasing seizure of lands from peasants in Igalaland amounts to compromising their sources of livelihood and the subjection of the rural economies to the international economy in a subordinate context. The changes taking place in rural areas havea direct impact on the lives of urban dwellers, in both positive and negative ways. For some rural dwellers, the ongoing changes present new opportunities; for others, they may intensify social exclusion and marginalization.[85]

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[82]Ibid., p 3.
[83]N9.7b Petroluem, Sugar Refineries take off. *The Nation*. Retrieved from www.thenationonlineng.net/n9-7b-petroluen-sugar-refineries-take-off/amp/ accessed ib 10/07/2020
[84] Laz Etemike and Omokiniovo Harriet Efanodor, "Contemporary globalization and the rural economy in Nigeria",*American International Journal of Social Science*, 4, 3, (2015): p 14
[85]Ibid., p 15.

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Conclusion

This paper concludes that the concession of about 400, 450 ha of land in Ibaji, Itobe, and Acharu was done with the hope of stimulating sustainable development in the area. However, the event in Ibaji is on the contrary. The reality is such that has disengaged peasants from their land and increasingly made many peasants who were hitherto in possession of smallholdings landless. This is paradoxical to the goal of sustainable development which was said to be one of the key benefits to be enjoyed by the natives. The paper found that the issuing of a Certificate of Occupancy to the Confluence Sugar Company Limited and the relative abandonment of the project has structurally but legally deprived many peasants of the right and ownership of their land despite the stagnated nature of the project. Hence, rather than helping the deficient food supply in Nigeria, land grabbing as witnessed in Ibaji has increased the number of the landless populations in Nigeria and transformed most farmers into proletariats, a situation which is paradoxical to sustainable development.

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