

# NORTH-SOUTH FORUM

Transnational agricultural investment

The **North-South Centre** is the focal point of the ETH Zurich in all affairs that involve developing countries and emerging economies. The centre promotes research collaboration and capacity development in international development and cooperation covering the technical, natural, human and social sciences.

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The Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South is an innovative research programme in the fields of global change and sustainable development. Encompassing a network of over 400 researchers active in more than 40 countries worldwide, it is dedicated to finding sustainable, practicable solutions to specific challenges of global change.

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## Transnational land acquisitions and rural development – Impacts on natural resources and livelihoods in developing countries

Tuesday, 18 May, 2010, 9:00 – 12:45 h

ETH Zurich, Main Building, Semperaula, G60  
Rämistrasse 101, Zurich

Free entrance, no registration required, conference language English



Tram 9 from "Bellevue"

The Semperaula is located in the ETH Zurich Main Building (HG, G60). The closest tram stop "ETH/Universitätsspital" can be reached by trams 6, 9 and 10.

Trams 6 and 10 from  
"Hauptbahnhof" or "Central"

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## Transnational agricultural investment

International investment in agriculture is not new. Foreign owned plantations and land lease have existed for long. In 2008, however, the food crisis with its enormous increase in commodity prices brought the rush for land to a new dimension, driven by the demand for food, water and energy security.

Transnational agricultural investment, in recent debates also referred to as “land grab”, is taking place on all continents, with the bulk of these deals made in Africa. Net food importers are anxious to secure their long-term food needs through agreements. These agreements are entered predominantly with poor and food insecure countries – countries with a seemingly large proportion of unutilised or underutilised land.

### Risks and potentials

In conditions where property rights are not guaranteed, the disadvantages of such land deals are evident: Farmers are rarely compensated when ownership shifts to foreign land holders, and local food security is further threatened. So far, negative economic and social implications have dominated the debate, but ecological consequences of an intensified use of natural resources are prone to arise. On the other hand, foreign investment in agriculture does have substantial potential: A flow of resources and know-how, the creation of employment, an improved infrastructure, and an increased agricultural productivity could certainly benefit developing countries.

### The need for action

To ensure that agricultural investments provide broad benefits and effectively contribute to development, actors at different levels have acknowledged the need for action – for example through the elaboration of a code of conduct for land deals. Yet, the knowledge base is still rather weak and mostly focused on case studies. The recent World Bank study, to be presented by Klaus Deininger, is therefore the first of its kind.

At the North-South Forum we will discuss these issues with researchers, research funders, policy-makers, and practitioners working in international development and cooperation.

## Programme

- 9:00** Introduction  
*Barbara Becker, North-South Centre, ETH Zurich*  
*Thomas Brey, NCCR North-South, University of Bern*
- 9:10** Large-scale acquisition of land rights for agricultural or natural resource-based use  
*Klaus Deininger, Development Research Group, World Bank, USA*
- 9:50** International legal aspects of investment in agricultural assets  
*Elisabeth Bürgi Bonanomi, World Trade Institute*
- 10:20** *Coffee break*
- 10:40** Livelihood impact of land acquisitions in Kenya  
*Ralf Leonhard, FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN), Austria*
- 11:10** Land governance in Laos  
*Peter Messerli, NCCR North-South*
- 11:40** **Panel and plenary discussion**  
Consequences for research and development cooperation  
*Facilitated by Rudolf Küng, Swiss National Public Radio*
- Elisabeth Bürgi Bonanomi, World Trade Institute  
Klaus Deininger, World Bank  
Rolf Kappel, ETH Zurich  
Ralf Leonhard, FIAN  
Peter Messerli, NCCR North-South  
Peter Niggli, Alliance Sud  
Andrea Ries, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- 12:30** Wrap-up and closing remarks  
*Barbara Becker, North-South Centre*