



**Rural Development Briefing in Central Africa**  
**A series of meetings on ACP-EU development issues**  
Regional Development Briefing n.1  
***Land access, land acquisitions and rural development: New challenges, new opportunities***

Hotel Mont Fébé, Yaoundé, Cameroun, 27-28 September 2010  
<http://www.acpbriefings.net>

***“Land policies, agricultural investments, responsible land governance and rural development: old and new challenges”***

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**Executive Summary**

One of the most important questions concerned with development today is whether large-scale agricultural investments - and the large-scale land acquisitions which go with them - are able to contribute to rural development in the host countries and regions concerned.

- > If they can: in what contexts, how, and under what conditions?
- > If they cannot: what else can be done?

In reality, the answer is, "*well, it all depends...*" on the context, the region, the conditions under which the investment is negotiated, implemented, controlled, and the conditions under which the land and the population in the investment zone become involved and benefit - *or do not* - from the effects of the investment.

Rural development is a process whereby economic structures and production systems change, mainly involving the following:

- agricultural development, increased production and agricultural income;
- the intensification of agricultural production, increased yield from the land;
- a wider distribution of the income derived from agricultural growth: this includes family farms and the poorest classes of country dwellers (landless peasants; peasants without capital, or with limited abilities to intensify output or to invest);
- higher rates of agricultural employment;
- diversification of activities and income; the establishment of non-agricultural activities;
- the alleviation of rural poverty; an increase in food security for the majority of the rural population.

An essential condition for agricultural and rural development is investment, which really means a series of complementary investments: private and public; by large-scale operators and family farms; investment in production and infrastructure, as well as in social welfare and social development.

Among the essential conditions for investment, and to ensure that the investment works, there are two factors concerned with the good governance of the land, and good governance in general: the safety and transparency of land rights; and in a more general way, the presence of land-focused institutions which are effective, fair, and accessible to all - social and economic stability.