

Securing land rights in irrigated scheme in Mali. Cas study of Sélingué.

In Africa, globally, governments embark on public investment in irrigation development to promote national food security especially when the national food supply is under constant threat from the unpredictability of rain-fed agriculture. Development is a messy, often inequitable business. Investments and policies usually favor some people or sectors over others and the playing field of opportunity is rarely flat. Should development be just for the majority or is it possible to ensure development for all? Nowhere is this choice more visible than in the approaches governments take to resettlement and downstream impacts from large irrigated infrastructure. Land tenure security is key to improving productivity and to promote rural development. In the Sahelian irrigation, a recurrent problem is the farmers' lack of tenure security. .

Land and land tenure systems are central in promoting livelihoods in developing countries since access to land and security of tenure are the main means through which food security and sustainable development can be achieved. Land tenure systems are significant in defining agricultural productivity, food security and poverty rates in households. Land tenure systems affect access to technological inputs and to extension services as well as membership to cooperatives. Gender differences in land tenure systems exist and these in turn affect farm productivity, food security and the household welfare.

A new land tenure law is currently under discussion in Mali, which is an opportunity to address some of the current gaps in how land is allocated and registered – both for the State and for local communities. Approximately 2,200,000 hectares are deemed to be suitable for the development of irrigated agriculture in Mali, only 20% of this land is currently developed. Sélingué is the second most important national irrigated scheme. Initially destined to compensate displaced communities, he covers 1,200 hectares with 1,943 plot holders. The neighbouring Maninkoura irrigation scheme, which also draws water from the river downstream Sélingué dam, developed more recently, measures 1,094 ha for 1,168 plot holders. The dam and associated irrigated perimeters are managed by the Office for Rural Development in Sélingué (ODRS).

Large irrigation schemes in West Africa are institutionally complex. They are generally small islands in the landscape, managed directly by the State. In the case of Sélingué, a land registration process will formalise the state ownership of the land that the irrigation schemes cover. The new land tenure law would then pave the way for farmers to be granted more secure contracts to the land that they work on within the scheme. The irrigation schemes fed by the Sélingué dam are currently being rehabilitated which provides an opportunity for reviewing how they are managed.

This paper , based on empirical investigations, is explores land tenure systems in Selingue and Maninkoura irrigation scheme, the nature of these systems (formal and informal), and analyses the roles of different actors. He is explores the gap between the official land tenure system, and the practice developed by irrigated farmers. Our methodology is based on extensive field surveys with irrigated farmers of Selingue and Maninkoura, manager of ODRS institution, and some stakeholders from the private sector. Our study try to develop a new approach of land tenure management, not

only considered security land right, but with a real comprehension of governance, and land tenure systems (rules, actors...), should respect the national land law system.

Like in other irrigated scheme (high-value land areas) monetarized land transactions are mushrooming. Those include the emergence of new practices such as “sales”. In Sélingue irrigated scheme, political elites from Bamako can buy some plot to grown rice during “week-end time”. These changes bring about new practices such a use of witnesses and of written contracts. Changes in land tenure systems bring about winners and losers. As land competition increases and as resource access relations become more monetarized, those with more access to financial resources (including local elites and urban middle classes) are able to gain control over valuable resources.

Studying current arrangements between stakeholders, being spontaneous or institutionalized, allows picturing issues in terms of decision-making, management schemes and territories to consider. Interactions between stakeholders and their territories will be analyzed through a comprehensive study of the different forms of arrangements on land and water management, which will further be used to analyze social, economic and environmental impacts of the development of irrigated agriculture. It aims at improve the understanding of the linkages between land tenure systems, food security, agricultural productivity and sustainable natural resource management. Analysis of land allocation strategies in irrigated agriculture schemes in West Africa yields lessons which can guide the design and implementation of current and forthcoming projects. Allocation of insufficient land makes the main purposes of large dam projects – to combat poverty and to increase national cereal production – more difficult to achieve.

Keywords: Land, tenure systems, food security, securing land right, governance, irrigated scheme.