

# Perceived Impacts of Radical Land-Use Reform and Equitable Land Distribution on Agrifood Value-Chain Governance and Resource-Based Conflict Reduction among Rural Farmers in Imo State, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Osuji, M.N., <sup>\*2</sup>Chikaire, J.U., <sup>3</sup>Ejiogu, C.C., <sup>4</sup>Omeire, E.U., <sup>5</sup>Adaigho, D., <sup>5</sup>Nmor, E., <sup>6</sup>Emerhirhi, E., <sup>7</sup>Udensi, V.A., <sup>8</sup>Ahuchaogu, U.E., <sup>9</sup>Duruanyim, H.I., <sup>9</sup>Ogbuji, T.O., <sup>9</sup>Ogbaa, S.I., <sup>9</sup>Kalu, A.O., <sup>9</sup>Ukpabi, J.I., <sup>9</sup>Okeoma, I.O., <sup>10</sup>Nnametu, J., <sup>11</sup>Osuagwu, C.O., <sup>11</sup>Oparaojiaku, J.O., <sup>3</sup>Izunobi, L.C., <sup>9</sup>Babatunde, O.R., <sup>9</sup>Abdulmumin, A.L., <sup>7</sup>Ahumaraeze, C., <sup>7</sup>Iheanacho, J.I., <sup>12</sup>Duru, E.E., <sup>7</sup>Ogbonna, I., <sup>7</sup>Austin –Egole, I.S., <sup>7</sup>Nzotta, N.U., <sup>7</sup>Ayozie, C.R., <sup>7</sup>Igbokwe, B.N., <sup>7</sup>Agwuocha, U., <sup>7</sup>Opara, U.O., <sup>7</sup>Ibe, C.N., <sup>13</sup>Uluocha, O.B., <sup>9</sup>Chima, A.M., <sup>1</sup>Mbakaogu, O.E., <sup>14</sup>Nwodo, G.O. and <sup>15</sup>Ogbonna, A.N

<sup>1</sup>Department of Agribusiness; <sup>2</sup>Department of Agricultural Extension, <sup>3</sup>Department of Environmental Management, <sup>4</sup>Department of Sustainable Social Development; Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State; <sup>5</sup>Delta State University of Science and Technology, Ozoro, Delta State; <sup>6</sup>Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State; <sup>7</sup>Directorate of General Studies; Federal University of Technology, Owerri; <sup>8</sup>Department of Surveying & Geoinformatics, Federal University of Technology, Owerri; <sup>9</sup>Department of Urban and Regional Planning, <sup>10</sup>Department of Estate Management and Valuation; <sup>11</sup>University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Umuagwo, Imo State; <sup>12</sup>Department of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, <sup>13</sup>Department of Forestry & Wildlife, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State, <sup>14</sup>Department of Geomatics, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, <sup>15</sup>Department of Forest and Environmental Management, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria **\*Corresponding Author Email:** jonadab.chikaire@futo.edu.ng +234-8065928862

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## ABSTRACT

One of the major problems of agriculture in Nigeria and Africa in general is the issue of land tenure arrangement. The way land is owned has prevented would-be enterprising farmers from investing in agriculture. Therefore, a reform of the land tenure arrangements is proposed as the assured answer by this research to the land problem. A total of 300 farmers were selected in Imo State, Nigeria for study. Questionnaire and oral discussions were used to elicit information from the farmers. Data gathered were analyzed using mean and percentages. Results showed the various agrifood value chain activities, such as processing /value addition (93%), marketing (96%), post-harvest management (94.6%) among others. The various forms of land reform as perceived by the respondents include transferring land ownership to small farmers (95.3%), land taxation (88%) and consolidation of holdings (83.3%) among others. Land reform/distribution can significantly guarantee improved agrifood system by guaranteeing secure land tenure and rights (M= 2.43), access to infrastructure (M=2.48), improves input supply (M=2.54), reduces post-harvest losses (M=2.57) among other roles. Land reform reduces conflicts by clarifying and recognizing rights to land (M=2.30), reduces overlapping/multiple claims(M=2.51), supports land-use planning and zoning(M=2.48). The above guarantees farmers heavy investments in agriculture for optimization of production and increase yield for sales to the markets and for family consumption. However, farmers face the following challenges accessing and using land: lack of secure land rights (M=2.47), customary norms(M=2.60), high cost of land (M=2.58), and small and fragmented holdings (M=2.61).

## INTRODUCTION

Agriculture stands as Nigeria's largest economic sector, contributing significantly

to the nation's GDP. In 2016, it constituted 24.4% of the Gross Domestic Product. The

sector primarily hinges on crop production, which makes up a staggering 90% of total output, while fisheries, forestry, and livestock contribute the remaining 10% (CBN, 2015). Although agriculture represents a substantial part of Nigeria's economic activities, its influence on government revenue and export earnings remains limited, accounting for just 4.8% of total foreign earnings in 2016. Nevertheless, the agricultural potential in Nigeria is immense, with 82 million hectares of arable land available, and only 34 million hectares currently utilized (Oni, 2011). With the government's renewed commitment to diversifying the economy through import substitution and a rapidly growing population, agriculture is becoming increasingly vital as a source of consumer and industrial demand.

Over the past five years, various administrations have prioritized agriculture as a strategy to diversify the economy, initiating several pertinent policies. The Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) launched in 2012 aimed to enhance farmers' incomes, boost food production, ensure food security, create jobs, and elevate Nigeria's status in the global food market (Ajani and Igbokwe, 2014). Reports indicate that the ATA led to an 11% increase in agricultural

output, reaching 202.9 million tonnes between 2011 and 2014. Additionally, it facilitated an increase in commercial bank lending to agriculture from 0.1% in 2011 to 5% in 2014, and helped to lower the food import bill by NGN 466 billion in 2014 (Adeshina, 2015). More recently, the Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP) was introduced to tackle food production deficiencies and enhance output quality. Concurrently, the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) has emphasized food security, aiming for self-sufficiency in the production of tomato paste, rice, and wheat by 2017, 2018, and 2019/2020 respectively. The ERGP projects a 31% increase in agricultural production value, rising to NGN 21 trillion by 2020 (Mgbenka and Mbah, 2016). Despite these policy efforts, the agricultural sector is largely comprised of retail segments within the value chain, a trend likely to persist across most agricultural products. The value chain in Nigeria is predominantly characterized by around 80% smallholder farmers and a handful of commercial processors, who face challenges such as inadequate inputs, outdated technology, and poor financing (Mgbenka and Mbah, 2016). Nigeria is a significant producer of various agricultural commodities, yet many of these sectors

remain underdeveloped. The emphasis tends to be on increasing production without a strong focus on self-sufficiency or enhancing value along the entire supply chain. For instance, insights from the Cocoa Barometer indicate that only a mere 6.6% of the value of a chocolate bar is attributed to diversification. This underscores the urgent need to ramp up both production and value addition across key agricultural products. A critical challenge in this landscape is the issue of land access, including how land is acquired, used, and distributed.

In Nigeria, land is foundational to the social, economic, and political development of individuals and households. Consequently, access to land plays a vital role in determining one's inclusion—or exclusion—in various societal, economic, and political processes. Numerous studies have illustrated the connection between land ownership and access to opportunities across these spheres. Limited access to land often correlates with social exclusion (Chikaire et al., 2014). In an agrarian economy, land is essential for generating income and supporting livelihoods. Without income opportunities and due to the ongoing challenge of low wages, landless individuals often find themselves marginalized, unable

to participate meaningfully in social and political activities within their communities or at larger levels. This, in turn, significantly diminishes their contributions to local agricultural production. Access to land is also crucial for enabling the rural poor to capitalize on market opportunities. When they have access to land, these individuals can engage with and benefit from the market's offerings. The way land is owned and governed has a substantial impact on economic growth.

In Nigeria, inadequate access to land and dysfunctional or corrupt land administration systems severely hinder agricultural development. Even small plots of land for crop cultivation can greatly enhance food security and quality. Policies promoting land lease markets can spur the growth of a thriving non-farm economy. Moreover, improving land administration can support broader public service reforms and lay the groundwork for more extensive reforms. Tenure rights to resources are critical in shaping natural resource management practices and the well-being of communities that depend on those resources (Chikaire et al., 2014).

Social stability is essential for ongoing economic and social growth, with

conflicts among farmers playing a crucial role in the stability of rural areas. When village disputes are managed effectively, they can be resolved before they escalate; on the other hand, unresolved issues can lead to farmer petitions, mass protests, or repeated legal battles, which pose a serious risk to rural social stability. Currently, farmer disputes showcase several notable trends. Most conflicts arise within villages, and a large number are related to land. According to Peoples Mediata (2017), land disputes make up the highest proportion of these conflicts. In traditional rural societies, land is not just a basic resource for farmers' livelihoods; it also holds significant social and emotional value. The rights associated with land—including its use, location, and boundaries—directly influence farmers' wealth and social standing.

Property rights economics suggests that when resources are scarce, conflicts of interest among individuals are inevitable, and these can be resolved through well-defined property rights. By providing incentives that shape economic behaviors, property rights also clarify who is involved in economic activities, thereby influencing the distribution of social wealth (Zhou, 2004). As the saying goes, “Those with

permanent property have steadfast hearts; those without permanent property have no steadfast hearts. Without steadfast hearts, they will indulge in extravagance and depravity, sparing no vice.” This indicates that clearly defined and secure land property rights are essential not only for farmers' economic security but also for fostering rural social stability. Therefore, a thorough investigation into how secure rural land property rights influence rural conflicts holds both significant theoretical and practical importance. It can help mitigate disputes, enhance rural governance, and contribute to comprehensive rural revitalization.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Agriculture in Imo State is primarily small-scale, with many farmers struggling to integrate into established agrifood value chains. Despite ongoing initiatives from the government and development partners aimed at enhancing agricultural outcomes, significant challenges remain. Key issues include fragmented land holdings, insecure tenure rights, and unfair land distribution practices, all of which hinder farmers from accessing enough productive agricultural land. These land-related obstacles prevent farmers from adopting advanced

technologies, expanding their production capabilities, engaging in processing, and securing favorable market terms. The current land use framework in Nigeria, particularly the Land Use Act of 1978, has faced criticism for centralizing land control and marginalizing local farmers. This creates barriers to effective land allocation for agrifood advancement. In Imo State, the situation is exacerbated by customary land tenure practices that often lack formal acknowledgment, which undermines farmers' trust to make long-term investments and pursue activities that would enhance value. Unless there are reforms targeting land access and distribution disparities, rural farmers will continue to encounter systemic challenges that limit their ability to realize the full potential of agrifood value chains. Thus, it's vital to explore rural farmers' perspectives on transformative land use reforms as a means to improve agrifood value chain management in Imo State.

The paper stands out for several reasons: it establishes an empirical link between land reform and value-chain governance. While many studies focus on land reform primarily as a matter of social justice or productivity, this paper takes a step further. It utilizes the perceptions of

rural farmers to illustrate how reforms in land use and distribution impact access to productive land, involvement in processing and marketing phases, and overall coordination along the agrifood value chain. This creates a unique analytical connection between land policy and value-chain management, an area that is seldom examined together in empirical research. Moreover, the study introduces the idea of conflict reduction as an important outcome of value chains. Rather than dismissing conflicts as mere background issues, it identifies resource-based conflicts as a fundamental obstacle to the efficiency of agrifood value chains. It highlights how insecure land tenure, unfair land allocation, and ambiguous land-use rights can undermine farm investments, hinder aggregation, complicate contract farming, and disrupt market linkages. This perspective has not been thoroughly explored in the existing literature on global agrifood value chains. Additionally, the paper draws upon evidence from smallholder and customary land systems, focusing on rural farmers operating under various land-tenure frameworks. The findings offer valuable insights pertinent to regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and parts of Latin America, where

formal markets and traditional governance coexist. The study proposes a transferable policy model based on its findings from Imo State, presenting a pathway for implementing radical land-use reforms, ensuring transparent land redistribution, and fostering inclusive land governance. These strategies aim to enhance agrifood value chains and mitigate land-related conflicts within smallholder agricultural economies. Ultimately, the global significance of this research lies in its assertion that land reform extends beyond just social or legal frameworks; it is a strategic tool for managing agrifood value chains and preventing conflict. This comprehensive viewpoint is relevant for countries grappling with increasing competition for land, climate-related pressures on agricultural resources, and growing instability in rural areas.

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The broad objective of this work is to examine rural farmers' perceptions of radical land use reform and distribution as a strategy for improved agrifood value chain management and conflicts reduction in Imo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives includes to;

- a). identify agrifood value chain management activities of the respondent;
- b). examine various forms of land reform opportunities;
- c). examine farmers' perceptions of how land use reform could improve agrifood value chain performance
- d).ascertain the current state of land access, use, and distribution among rural farmers in Imo State.
- e). ascertain perceived role of land reform in reducing conflicts in the study area.
- f) identify perceived constraints faced by rural farmers in accessing and using land for productive agrifood activities.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

Imo State is situated in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria (fig. 1). It shares its borders with Anambra State to the north, Rivers State to the west and south, and Abia State to the east. The state derives its name from the Imo River, which flows along its eastern edge. Owerri serves as the state capital, and the slogan that captures its essence is "Eastern Heartland." Though Imo is the third smallest state in Nigeria by area, it ranks as the fourteenth most populous, boasting an estimated population of over 5.5 million as of 2022 (Amadiume, 2024; Oriji, 2011). Topographically, Imo State

showcases a diverse landscape, with northern regions characterized by the Niger Delta swamp forests, while the rest of the state transitions into the drier Cross–Niger forests. Key geographical features include several rivers and lakes, notably the Awbana, Imo, Orashi, and Otamiri rivers, as well as Oguta Lake in the west. The state’s borders stretch for approximately 84 km (52 mi) alongside Anambra State to the north, around 104 km adjacent to Abia State to the east, and about 122 km next to Rivers State to the south and west. It is located within the latitude range of 4°45'N to 7°15'N and the longitude range of 6°50'E to 7°25'E, encompassing an area of roughly 5,100 square kilometers (Oriji, 2011; NPC, 2017)

Agriculture stands as the primary occupation for many residents; however, over-farming and high population density have significantly degraded the soil. This decline may stem from inefficient farming methods, a lack of resources, decreasing soil productivity, reliance on outdated agricultural techniques, limited credit access, and low capital investment. To foster sustainable development, both state government and private sector interventions are crucial, especially since an economy heavily reliant on crude oil, natural gas, and

palm oil lacks diversification. The climate features a rainy season from April to October, with annual rainfall between 1,500 and 2,200 mm (59 to 87 inches). Average temperatures surpass 20 °C (68.0 °F), yielding a relative humidity of 75%, which can peak at 90% during the rainy months (Amadiume, 2024; Oriji, 2011). A two-month Harmattan season occurs from late December to late February, with the hottest period spanning January to March. Unfortunately, high population density and extensive farming have led to soil degradation and the loss of much native vegetation, resulting in deforestation and increased soil erosion. Regular heavy rainfall exacerbates this issue, causing significant damage to homes and infrastructure, with a population density ranges from 230 to 1,400 people per square kilometer (NPC, 2017)

A quantitative survey was conducted among all registered crop farmers, utilizing a purposive random sampling technique to select 300 registered farmers from a pool of 3000 farmers listed by the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) in Owerri, Imo State. Data were gathered through questionnaires and in-depth discussions with the farmers. The results were analyzed using

percentages, means, and standard deviations. Objectives 1, 2, and 4 were accomplished using percentages presented in frequency tables. While objectives 3,5, and 6 (perceived effects of land reform on agrifood improvement, perceived role of land reform in reducing land conflicts, and perceived constraints to land access and use) were evaluated using a 3-point Likert type This is mathematically represented as s

$$\frac{3 + 2 + 1}{3} = \frac{6}{2} = 2.0$$

scale of strongly agree, agree and disagree, assigned weights of 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The resulting values were summed and divided by 3 to establish a discriminating mean value of 2.50. Any mean value that equaled or exceeded 2.50 was deemed acceptable when we gather data from among crop farmers.



**Figure 1: Map of Imo State showing the Local Government Areas of study**

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Agrifood Value Chain Management Activities**

Table 1 presents the major agrifood value chain management activities carried out by farmers. Farm production activities account for 96.6% and include a wide range of operations such as land clearing, planting, weeding, and harvesting. Post-harvest management activities are also common (94.6%), along with processing and value addition (93%). Marketing and distribution activities account for 96% of responses. Quality assurance and standards compliance represent 76.6%. Other important activities include finance and resource management (82.3%), information and technology usage (89.3%), and stakeholder coordination (88%), procurement (96%) and risk management (93%). The agrifood value

chain encompasses all the activities performed by various intermediaries, ranging from producers to service providers, leading up to the sale of the final product. This perspective starts with the production of raw materials and progresses through different businesses involved in activities like trading and processing. Activities within the value chain can be categorized into primary and supportive segments. Primary activities include production, logistics, processing, and marketing. In contrast, supportive activities assist both the primary functions and each other by providing essential inputs, technology, human resources, and various overarching company functions (Poter, 1985; Akyuz et al., 2023).

**Table 1: Agrifood Value Chain Management Activities**

<b>Value Chain Activities</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Farm Production	290	96.6
Post-Harvest Management	284	94.6
Processing Value Addition	279	93.0
Marketing Distribution	288	96.0
Quality Assurance Standard	230	76.6
Finance and Resources Management	247	82.3
Information Technology	268	89.3
Stakeholder Coordination	264	88.0
<b>Procurement</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>96.0</b>
<b>Risk Management</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>93.0</b>

\*Multiple Response

### Forms of Radical Land-use Reform Perceived by Respondents

Table 2 showed that land-use reforms encompass various measures aimed at restructuring ownership, rights and usage of

land. These forms of redistributions include transferring land ownership to small farmers (95.3%). This means the reallocation or

distribution of lands from large land owners to small farmers, tenants, or landless individuals who have little title or no lands at all and those who dwell on marginal lands. Tenancy reform (97%), consolidation of holding (83.3%), addressing customary rights of farmers (87%), and ceiling (92.6%) of land are other forms of land reform strategies. Tenancy reform aims at improving the rights and conditions of land users such as tenants, share croppers and renters of land. Tenancy reform guarantees security of tenure, fair rent, and access to credit faculties for farmers. This also regulates the relationship existing between land lords and tenants, often establishing standards for tenancy and right agreements fragmented agricultural land holding into larger, more efficient units. It involves pooling small and scattered plot together, to create valuable farms, this increases agricultural food production and improve the agrifood value chain management. Again, land reform can address the right of indigenous people to their native lands. While land ceilings set a maximum amount of land one can acquire and own. These regulates land investments and affect agrifood system for productivity and sustainable products.

Other forms of land reform are regularization/registration of land (93.6%), introducing land taxation (88%), formalizing customary rights (78.3%), self-governance of traditional areas (92%), paying compensations to land owners (80.3%), and expropriation of private land to farmers (73.3%). Land regularization marks the process of registering lands in areas where the tenure and boundaries are unclear or informal. This helps reduce tension and facilitate access to credits and other resources for farmers. Taxation on land encourage land owners to sell or develop land, thereby increasing land available for distributes like regulation commercializes land and set price control mechanism that will guide size of land and locate and future transactions in land. Land lease involves guarantees improved food production as enterprising farmers gets a track of land for a long period of time, with the intension of making much and long term improvements on the land. The Nigerian land use Act guarantees this and specifies a period of 99 years and tenants are required to reapply for extension or renewal on expiration of the lease period.

Generally, land reform is regarded as a method for instituting structural changes

within the agricultural sector, thus modifying the distribution of landholdings or income levels. Consequently, pilot projects cannot be classified as land reform since they function within an established structural framework, although they may be beneficial in highlighting management issues or the economics of various "models" or arrangements that could form part of a future reform. Likewise, land settlement in frontier areas typically does not represent land reform, even though it might facilitate the cultivation of previously unused land. The impact of land settlement on the structure of landholdings in a nation can vary based on how settlers are chosen and the size distribution of the newly created holdings. The nature of the structural change that occurs is contingent upon the existing tenure type and the suggested alternative.

Land reform focuses on the interconnected elements of productivity and fairness in land usage. It is often pursued as an end goal, but within a developmental framework, it is typically viewed as a component of agrarian reform or rural development initiatives. Unlike political, administrative, fiscal, or monetary reforms, land reform is usually specific to one sector and involves alterations in the control of a physical asset

that is not only limited in quantity but also serves as the fundamental resource for the majority of individuals in developing nations for their sustenance. Land reform according to Tarisayi, (2014), may encompass various degrees of modification, including some or all of the following:

1. The redistribution of either public or private land aimed at altering land distribution patterns and the size of holdings. This typically results in an increased number of small- or medium-sized farms and a decrease in large holdings. Alternatively, nationalization of all land can occur, consolidating it into state-owned large holdings.
2. The consolidation of individual landholdings, effectively reorganizing the spatial arrangement of control. Fragmented properties can be rearranged into contiguous parcels. This can happen with or without altering the landownership distribution regarding the area or value assigned to each owner.
3. Modifications in landownership and tenure rights, which may occur with or without the physical redistribution of land. The allocated land can be given to new owners or to the existing farmers currently working it. Conversely, land doesn't have to be redistributed; instead, tenants or workers

may become the owners of the land they cultivate. In this scenario, the outcome typically results in a redistribution of income from former landowners to the new proprietors. The new landowners may either operate cooperatively or independently.

4. Adjustments in tenure conditions without altering ownership or redistributing land. The rights of individuals working the land

can be legally protected without changing ownership. Changes in tenure conditions could include offering secure tenure, establishing fair crop-sharing agreements, cooperative land management, and similar arrangements. These alterations could also involve transitioning from customary land rights to formal legal rights ( Tarisayi, (2014).

**Table 2: Forms of Radical Land Use Reform**

Forms of Land Use Reform	*Frequency	Percentage
Transferring land ownership to small farmers	286	95.3
Tenancy reforms	291	92.0
Consolidation of holding	250	83.3
Addressing customary rights of farmers	261	87.0
Setting maximum ceiling on land	278	92.6
Regularization/registration of land	281	93.6
Addressing rights of indigenous population	287	95.6
Introducing land taxation	264	88.0
Land leasing	255	89.0
Formalizing customary rights	235	78.3
Self-governance of traditional areas	276	92.0
Paying much compensation to owners	241	80.3
Expropriation of private land of farmers	220	73.3

\*Multiple Responses

**Perceived Role of Land Reform for Improved Agrifood System**

As shown in table 3, land redistribution is a key catalyst for growth if executed appropriately. With mark index (M) of 2.0 land reform benefits the agrifood system by secure land tenure and rights for all (M=2.43). Land reform establish clear and secure land ownership or tenancy rights which encourages farmers to invest in long

term land improvements and sustainable farming practices. This reduces risk of encroachments and land grabbing. Land reforms guarantees access to finance/resources (M=2.48), improves land management practice (M=2.74), improves input supply (M=2.54), improves access to market (M=2.67), empowering rural

communities (M=2.64), reducing conflicts over landed resources (M=2.69), and promoting gender equality (M=2.60). Farmers with secure tenure/rights have access to finance and other productive resources such as credits, and loans for investments in modern farming technologies, irrigation systems and other essentials for production optimization. They adopt more sustainable land management practices such as soil conservation, crop rotation, water management and fertilizer application practices which sometimes are long term measures which ensures increase productivity. Farmers are more willing to invest in seeds, fertilizers and other inputs, which have secure access to land. They develop reliable production facilities for processing and marketing channels, when they have secure access to land. Land reform empowers rural communities by providing with a stake in the land and it's resources, fostering a sense of ownership and participation in the value chain.

Other roles include adopting new farming technology (M=2.45), enhanced farmers bargaining power (M=2.81),

reduces post-harvest losses (M=2.57), promotes knowledge exchange among farmers (M=2.31), reduces land holding inequality (M=2.45), diversified calorie or diet (M=2.54), leads to agro business growth (M=2.48), leads to local economic multiplier (M=2.76) and reduction of social unrest (M=2.25). Farmers who have secure access to land adopt new farming technologies for improved production and yield for food security and availability. People with secure access to land have more bargaining power in their business; they procure storage facilities which reduce post-harvest losses; value chain development creates opportunities for knowledge exchange between farmers, researchers and other stakeholders, promoting higher yields and improved livelihood. Farmers eat more balanced diet with increased yield which guarantees food security; make more money and services, invest more money in agriculture, and growth in their farming assures land reform, reduces social unrest and bring peace, reduces land holding inequality and gives everyone a high sense of belonging.

**Table 3: Perceived Role of Land Reform for Improved Agrifood System**

<b>Radical Land Use Reform Roles</b>	<b>*Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Secure land tenure and rights	2.43	0.662
Guarantees access to finance/resources	2.48	0.581

Improves land management practices	2.74	0.764
Improves input supply for agriculture	2.54	0.491
Improves access to market	2.67	0.806
Empowering rural communities	2.64	0.541
Reducing conflicts over landed resources	2.69	0.741
Promoting gender equality	2.60	0.671
Facilitates processing and marketing	2.84	0.811
Adopting new farming technology	2.45	0.651
Enhanced farmers bargaining power	2.81	0.451
Reduces post-harvest losses	2.57	0.348
Promotes knowledge exchange among farmers	2.31	0.413
Reduced land holding inequality	2.45	0.516
Diversified calorie/diet	2.51	0.610
Leads to agro business growth	2.48	1.01
Leads to local economic multiplier	2.76	0.98
Reduces social unrest	2.25	1.05

**\*Mean 2.00 Accepted**

### **Current Land Access, Use and Distribution**

Table 4 shows the present situation of land access, use, and distribution in the study area. The results indicate that land is largely governed by the customary land tenure system (90%). There are widespread overlapping statutory and customary claims (83.3%), and low transparency in land allocation processes (76.6%). Forced land acquisition is also significant (93.6%), especially by government authorities and wealthy individuals. Land rights are commonly transferred through families and communities and are regulated by traditional institutions. There is often a lack of formal documentation, which leads to multiple

claims and counterclaims over the same parcels of land, thereby creating conflicts. Several communities reported the forceful takeover of ancestral lands without adequate compensation. In some cases, security forces are allegedly used to prevent farming activities and crops are destroyed. Other major issues include land fragmentation (100%), scarcity of arable land (98%), and frequent use of marginal lands (91.3%). There is also a notable lack of digital land records (88%), poor governance of land matters (82.3%), and slow judicial resolution of land disputes (74.6%). During oral discussion, many respondents noted that

most farmers inherit small plots from their parents, and these holdings are often not formally registered. Because of small holdings, land grabbing, scarcity, and speculation in land markets, farmers often find it difficult to prove ownership. The lack

of computerized and well-maintained land records further worsens the problem. The Farmers cannot easily prove ownership of land due to the lack of computerized and localized record keeping

**Table 4: Current Land Access, Use and Distribution Among Farmers in study Area**

Current Land Issues	*Frequency	Percentage (%)
Customary tenure system	270	90.0
Overlapping statutory/customary claims	251	83.3
Low transparency in allocation	230	76.6
Forced land acquisition	281	93.6
Land fragmentation	300	100.0
Scarcity of arable land	294	98.0
Frequent use of marginal lands	274	91.3
Lack of digital land records	264	88.0
Poor governance of land issues	247	82.3
Slow judicial resolution of land cases	224	74.6

**\*Multiple responses recorded.**

**Role of Land Reform in Reducing Resource Conflicts**

Land reform reduces land-related conflicts in several important ways, as shown in **Table 5**. The mean scores above the acceptance benchmark of 2.0 indicate strong agreement among respondents on the roles of land reform. The results show that land reform helps to clarify and formally recognize land rights (M = 2.30), recognize different categories of land users (M = 2.46), and reduce overlapping or multiple claims to land (M = 2.51). One major cause of land conflicts in the study area is that different land users including crop farmers, herders,

families, investors, and communities often lay claim to the same parcels of land. Land reform therefore reduces conflict by mapping land boundaries, registering holdings, and formally recognizing ownership and use rights under statutory, customary systems or community land use right. Land reform policies legally recognize grazing lands, stock routes, and dry-season corridors. This supports designated ranching areas and crop–livestock arrangements and helps protect seasonal access routes. Where land is properly allocated and documented

by traditional authorities, local governments, families and community leaders, conflicts are reduced because ownership and usage rights are clearer. Land reform policies recognize and support appropriate land-use arrangements. Land reform efforts strengthen local land governance systems ( $M = 2.35$ ), recognize dispute-resolution mechanisms ( $M = 2.34$ ), and protect vulnerable and mobile land users ( $M = 2.54$ ). Local community land committees responsible for peaceful conflict resolution are also supported and approved through land reform efforts. Customary–statutory joint land management bodies, where they already exist, are formally recognized by land reform policies. These reforms also acknowledge the importance of local mediation and arbitration committees. Women, tenant farmers, and pastoralists are often excluded from formal land systems and arrangements. However, through land reform measures, both primary and secondary land-use rights are recognized. Lease agreements and other economic

arrangements are formalized so that all users are protected, thereby reducing the occurrence of resource-use conflicts.

Other roles of land reform in reducing conflicts include supporting land-use planning ( $M \approx 2.48$ ), reducing production disruptions ( $M = 2.38$ ), and encouraging continuous farm investment ( $M = 2.41$ ). During land reform implementation, high-intensity crop areas are clearly separated from grazing areas. Livestock movement corridors are protected, and settlements and commercial zones are properly mapped, demarcated, and identified. This helps prevent land encroachment, crop damage, destruction of farm structures and buildings, animal theft, and retaliatory attacks. Land reform also helps ensure that farmers can maintain production throughout the year. It reduces farm abandonment, livestock displacement, and market-access blockages, while promoting the delivery of extension and veterinary services on a continuous basis.

**Table 5: Land Reform Roles in Reducing Conflicts**

<b>Land Reform Roles</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Clarifies and recognizes rights to land	2.30	0.45
Recognizes different land users	2.46	0.57
Reduces overlapping and multiple claims	2.51	0.49
Strengthens local land governance systems	2.35	0.61

Recognizes dispute-resolution mechanisms	2.34	0.47
Protects vulnerable and mobile land users	2.54	0.53
Supports land-use planning and zoning	2.48	0.64
Reduces production disruptions	2.38	0.48
Encourages continuous farm investment	2.41	0.52
Accepted mean =2.0		

### Constraints Faced by Farmers in Accessing and Using Land in the study Area

Table 6 shows the constraints faced by farmers in accessing and using land for farming business. With an accepted discrimination mean index of 2.0, the following challenges are prominent: lack of secure land rights (M=2.47), bureaucratic and costly land formalization processes (M=2.50), customary norms or informally allocated land (M=2.60), high cost of land (M=2.58), and small and fragmented holdings (M=2.61). Because most farmers rely on customary land rights, their land titles are often unregistered, informal, undocumented, and insecure. This makes them vulnerable to eviction, disputes, and displacement by local political actors, thereby preventing long-term investment in sustainable farming. Additionally, the process of obtaining legal documents for land titles and registration is complex and resource-intensive, discouraging farmers from pursuing formalization. The exclusion

of women from land ownership also poses a significant barrier for aspiring women farmers. In some cases, the prohibitively high cost of land makes it difficult for farmers to expand their operations. The limitations of small land holdings negatively affect economies of scale and mechanization. As a result, farmers are less able to adopt diverse cropping systems or modern sustainable land management practices. Other challenges include limited access to finance (M=2.68), poor infrastructure (M=2.41), low levels of education (M=2.65), and recurring land conflicts (M=2.57). Small-scale farmers often cannot access agricultural credit due to a lack of formal land titles and collateral. This limitations discourages are compounded by inadequate roads, irrigation, storage facilities, and market access, which further hinder farmers' productivity and output.

**Table 6: Constraints faced by farmers in accessing/using land**

Constraints	Mean	SD
Lack of secure land rights	2.47	0.55
Bureaucratic/costly land formalization	2.50	0.61
Customary norms/land given informally	2.60	0.50
High cost of land	2.58	0.48
Small and fragmented holdings	2.61	0.63
Limited access to finance	2.68	0.54
Poor infrastructure	2.41	0.57
Low level of education	2.65	0.44
Recurring land conflict	2.57	0.57

Accepted mean = 2.0

## CONCLUSION

Land is undeniably the most valuable asset for farmers, playing a critical role in agricultural production. However, the ownership of land can often complicate its effective use as an agricultural resource. To address these challenges, land reform is essential for ensuring fair allocation, availability, and distribution of land. For land reform to truly succeed, it should include strategies aimed at boosting farmers' productivity and income. Land reform plays a crucial role in minimizing conflicts and preventing disruptions in production by clearly defining ownership through land titling. This clarification enhances security for landowners and encourages investment. Additionally, redistributing land empowers

those in poverty, reduces inequality, and stimulates economic growth, which contributes to greater stability. Well-structured reforms tackle fundamental grievances, formalize property rights, and improve access to resources. This transformation turns insecure land tenure into productive assets, helping to reduce disputes over resources. Land is fundamental to human life; it represents wealth, status, and power. Its availability is critical for reducing poverty and ensuring food security, driving economic development and growth. To foster agricultural advancement, land must be readily accessible—reform is a key mechanism for achieving this. By

implementing land tenure reform measures, the government can empower its citizens to realize their potential and actively contribute to the development process.

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