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Biofuel investments and the question of local economy in Africa: A comparative study on Tanzania and Ethiopia

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The states in sub-Saharan Africa are focusing much on crafting policies that are desperate to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). But, the region is ill-prepared in addressing key questions on how to evaluate the investments, secure benefits that are generated from the investments and integrate them into their domestic economy. This is particularly critical for investments that seek vast territorial resources where such investments are likely to interface with existing land uses. Large-scale investments in agrofuels are examples of this. Many African states have renewed their control overland resources. As a result decisions on land allocation processes have been swift; often overriding local rights. Furthermore, promises and expectations from agrofuel investments have increasingly become uncertain. This has put Africa's agrofuel politics into question as many of them appear to have become failed. In this regard, the post-failure period is presenting itself with particular conditions that seem to nurture land conflicts and suspicions between local people, investors and state agencies. In this respect, failed projects in particular are perpetuating 'new' local land dynamics. This study employs case studies from Tanzania and Ethiopia to explore these dynamics.

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