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The right to food in the face of land commodification and economic globalisation in West Africa: The case of Guinea

**Il diritto al cibo di fronte alla mercificazione della terra
e alla globalizzazione economica nell’Africa occidentale:
il caso della Guinea**

Against the backdrop of accelerating economic globalisation and the dynamics of land appropriation and commodification in West Africa, there are growing concerns about human rights, particularly the right to food. In Guinea, problems are emerging within a framework characterised by land market liberalisation, increasing foreign investment pressure, and inadequate legal mechanisms to effectively protect rural populations. The right to food, recognised as a fundamental human right in numerous international legal instruments including, what is noteworthy, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), encompasses not only the physical and economic access to adequate food, but also a secure access to productive resources, especially land. Yet, current land policies tend to promote a utilitarian and market-driven view of land, often to the detriment of local “communities” rights and food sovereignty. This article critically analyses the tensions between land commodification, the logic of economic globalisation, and the effective realisation of the right to food in Guinea. Adopting a human rights-based approach, it seeks to examine the responsibilities of both the Guinean State and private and international actors regarding the protection and fulfilment of this right. Drawing on the example of Guinea for reflection on broader regional trends in West Africa and the specific legal and socio-political context, the paper investigates legal sources, field studies, and public policies in light of international human rights standards.

Keywords: right to food, land commodification, economic globalisation, human rights, land governance, food security, West Africa, Guinea

Nel contesto dell'espansione rapida della globalizzazione economica e delle dinamiche di appropriazione e mercificazione della terra nell'Africa occidentale, si fanno sempre più pressanti le preoccupazioni riguardo ai diritti umani, con particolare attenzione al diritto al cibo. In Guinea alcuni problemi emergono in un quadro caratterizzato dalla liberalizzazione del mercato fondiario, dall'aumento della pressione degli investimenti stranieri e da meccanismi giuridici inefficaci a tutelare le popolazioni rurali. Il diritto al cibo – riconosciuto come diritto umano fondamentale in numerosi strumenti giuridici internazionali, in particolare nel Patto Internazionale sui Diritti Economici, Sociali e Culturali (ICESCR) – comprende non solo l'accesso fisico ed economico a cibo adeguato, ma anche un accesso sicuro alle risorse produttive, soprattutto alla terra. Tuttavia, le politiche attuali in materia di terra privilegiano una visione utilitaristica e orientata al mercato, spesso a discapito dei diritti delle comunità locali e della sovranità alimentare. Questo articolo propone un'analisi critica delle tensioni tra la mercificazione della terra, la logica della globalizzazione economica e la realizzazione efficace del diritto al cibo in Guinea. Adottando un approccio fondato sui diritti umani, l'articolo si propone di esaminare le responsabilità sia dello Stato guineano sia degli attori privati e internazionali in merito alla tutela e al rispetto di questo diritto. In tale prospettiva, occorre riflettere sui più ampi trend regionali dell'Africa occidentale, nonché sul contesto giuridico e socio-politico specifico.

Parole chiave: diritto al cibo, mercificazione della terra, globalizzazione economica, diritti umani, governance della terra, sicurezza alimentare, Africa occidentale, Guinea

Introduction

Food, long understood as a simple physiological need essential for human survival, is now being considered from a much broader perspective, as a strategic resource that is crucial for national security and the balance of international relations. Indeed, food is no longer solely a humanitarian issue; it has become a matter of sovereignty, a factor in geopolitical stability, and a structuring element in the dynamics of global power. This evolution can be explained by the increasing interweaving of food systems with such essential dimensions as economic stability, social cohesion, and the resilience of states in the face of contemporary crises. In this context, any disruption related to the availability or accessibility of food cannot be reduced to a local or temporary crisis.¹ It acts as a powerful indicator of structural vulnerabilities and may, in certain cases, constitute a direct trigger for political instability, social tensions or even armed conflicts. Recent history shows, moreover,

¹ S. Savary et al., *Cartographie des mécanismes de perturbation et de résilience dans les systèmes alimentaires*, "Sécurité alimentaire" 2020, no. 12, pp. 695–717; M.A. Kamenya et al., *Investissements publics dans l'agriculture et sécurité alimentaire dans la CEDEAO*, "Food Policy" 2022, vol. 113, 102349.

that food price spikes as well as shortages of basic products may generate massive protest movements, weaken existing regimes and encourage the emergence of collective violence.

This dynamic takes on a particularly acute dimension in West Africa, a region marked by a combination of aggravating factors that include a rapid population growth, scarcity and overexploitation of arable land, increased dependence on food imports, or extreme vulnerability to climatic hazards.² In this fragile context, food insecurity reaches critical levels and becomes both a direct threat to social stability and a strategic factor that redraws political balances.³ Thus, West African food systems appear as paradoxical spaces constituting potential sources of instability when they fail, but also levers of resilience when strengthened by appropriate public policies and regional cooperation strategies. The challenge is therefore to transform food into an instrument of security and stability, not only for Guinea, but also, given the depth of interdependencies⁴ for the sub-regional order.

Thus, the right to food is a fundamental right based on the principle that every individual must have regular, permanent and unhindered access to sufficient food, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to be able to lead a healthy, dignified and active life. This right is intrinsically linked to the rights to an adequate standard of living, social justice, and respect for human dignity. It is enshrined in several international legal instruments, notably in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)⁵ which recognises the right of everyone to be free from hunger and to have access to adequate, sufficient and culturally acceptable food. The right to food is not explicitly mentioned in the main African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), but it is implicitly recognised through other

² M.A. Kamenya et al., *Investissements publics dans l'agriculture...*

³ H. Canton, *Organisation des Nations unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture-FAO*, w: *The Europa Directory of International Organizations 2021*, London 2021, pp. 297–305; C. Hendrix, H.-J. Brinkman, *Food Insecurity and Conflict Dynamics: Causal Linkages and Complex Feedbacks*, "Stability: International Journal of Security and Development" 2013, vol. 2, no. 2, 26.

⁴ A. Diabaté, B.S. Diallo, *Assessing the effectiveness of the right to food in the context of economic globalisation: The case of Mali in West Africa*, "Przegląd Prawa Rolnego" 2025, no. 1, pp. 123–145.

⁵ The ICESCR was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 2200 A (XXI) of 16 December 1966. It entered into force in 1976 and constitutes, together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (hereinafter: ICCPR), the International Bill of Human Rights, The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights> [accessed on 14.06.2025].

articles, particularly Article 4 (Right to Life), Article 16 (Right to Health), and Article 22 (Right to Economic, Social and Cultural Development).⁶ This implicit recognition was established by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHART) in the *SERAC v Nigeria* case.⁷ Additionally, the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women (Maputo Protocol) explicitly recognises a right to food security for women under Article 15.

However, despite this normative recognition, the effective enjoyment of this right remains a major challenge in many regions of the world, particularly in West Africa. For example, in the Republic of Guinea, its practical implementation is hindered by numerous structural and cyclical obstacles, among which the most worrying challenges are the increasing commoditisation of agricultural land and the effects of economic globalisation, both disrupting land balances and traditional food systems. Pressure from domestic and foreign investors on arable land intensifies land conflicts, undermines the livelihoods of rural populations, and exacerbates the already precarious situation of smallholder farmers. This, in turn, contributes to adverse impacts such as eroding food sovereignty and increasing the vulnerability of local communities. In face of such worrying reality, a question about the effectiveness of the right to food must be asked, while an attempt to answer it may be also sought in the Guinean context. The present study aims to critically analyse and evaluate the implementation of the right to food in the Republic of Guinea. It will focus on the current national and international legal framework, the consequences of land market liberalisation with regards the access to land and food, and possible alternatives for strengthening food security for Guinean populations. Ultimately, this reflection aims to identify sustainable and equitable solutions to guarantee better the right to food for all.⁸ It adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary legal methodology grounded in a human rights-based approach and combines the doctrinal analysis of key

⁶ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-charter-human-and-peoples-rights> [accessed on 14.06.2025].

⁷ Social and Economic Rights Action Center (SERAC) and Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) v Nigeria (Communication No. 155/96) (Communication 155 of 1996) [2001] ACHPR 35 (27 October 2001). See generally, A. Eide, *Economic, Social and Cultural Rights As Human Rights*, in: A. Eide, C. Krause, A. Rosas (eds.), *Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights: A Textbook*, Leiden 1995, pp. 21–40; K. Drzewicki, *Internationalization of Human Rights and Their Juridization*, in: R. Hanski, M. Suksi (eds.), *An Introduction to the International Protection of Human Rights: A Textbook*, Turku 1999, p. 31.

⁸ P.-E. Bouillot, A. Diabaté, F. Garcia, *Le droit des contrats: outil de sécurité alimentaire dans le commerce et les investissements internationaux?* in: F. Collart Dutilleul, Th. Bréger

international instruments on the right to food and land, such as the ICESCR, UN General Comment No. 12, FAO Voluntary Guidelines, and UNDROP, with the examination of regional African and Guinean national laws.⁹

Using Guinea as a case study, the research explores the impacts of land commodification and economic globalisation on the right to food, drawing from primary and secondary sources including legal texts, policy documents, NGO reports, and academic studies. Beyond the legal analysis, a critical human rights perspective highlights power imbalances, neoliberal policy effects, and governance accountability gaps. Overall, the study relies primarily on desk research, supplemented by qualitative data from documented interviews and civil society reports, aiming to provide an illustrative rather than exhaustive analysis.

1. An appropriate, but insufficient, international, regional and national legal framework

The legal framework governing the right to food and land management in Guinea is based on a set of international, regional and national standards. At the international level, several instruments govern this right. One is the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which enshrines the fundamental right of every individual to adequate food. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations, particularly SDG 2 which aims to eliminate hunger, are also a major reference. The FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Land Governance and the Right to Food outline the principles that seek to promote fair and sustainable management of land resources, while particular focus is put on food vulnerability and insecure land tenure.¹⁰ At the regional level, the primary African regional legal framework for food security is the Model Law on Food Security and

(eds.), *Penser une démocratie alimentaire*, vol. II: *Proposition Lascaux entre ressources naturelles et besoins fondamentaux*, San José 2014.

⁹ The right to food is included in Article 11 § 1 of the 1966 ICESCR in the context of the (more general) right to an adequate standard of living, and in subparagraphs (a) and (b) of Article 11 § 2 through the fundamental right of all persons to be free from hunger; in doing so, the improvement of methods of production, conservation and distribution of food is prescribed, as is the equitable distribution of global food resources in relation to needs.

¹⁰ Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, Rome, 11 May 2012, Spec. item 3.2 CFS, 37th Session, Rome 17–22 October 2011, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/023/mc122f.pdf> [accessed on 14.06.2025]; Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa, Land Policy in Africa: A Framework to Strengthen Land Rights, Enhance Productivity and Secure

Nutrition in Africa promoting a rights-based approach to food security for all Africans, adopted by the African Union (AU) and the Pan-African Parliament in 2024.

This framework builds on international instruments, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and is supported by the provisions of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement on food security. Regional organisations also play a role to be seen, among other things in the establishment of a regional food security reserve by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) through a Supplementary Act.¹¹ At the national level, the Guinean legislative framework is primarily structured around the 1992 Land and Property Law which constitutes the central legal instrument governing land management and use in Guinea. This law defines the various land ownership regimes, specifies the conditions for accessing and using land, and establishes the principles governing land and property management.

However, its implementation remains confronted with several major challenges, notably the coexistence of customary land law and modern law. This, in turn, gives rise to conflicts of jurisdiction and interpretation. In addition, the absence of a reliable land registry, coupled with the weakness of control and enforcement mechanisms, hinders the effectiveness of this legislation and deepens land insecurity. In addition to this legislative framework, Guinea has implemented several agricultural strategies and policies aimed at ensuring food security and promoting the development of the agricultural sector. Among them, the National Agricultural Development Policy (PNDA) and the National Agricultural Investment and Food Security Program (PNIASA) occupy a prominent place. These initiatives aim to increase agricultural productivity, modernise rural infrastructure, and promote local sectors to reduce the country's food dependence. However, their implementation faces structural obstacles, including a lack of funding, insufficient agricultural infrastructure, and weak organisation of sector stakeholders, all of them limiting their real impact on the food security of populations. Furthermore, several public institutions are involved in land governance and the regulation of food production in Guinea. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock

Livelihoods, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/30239-doc_framework_and_guidelines_on_land_policy_in_africa.pdf [accessed on 15.06.2025].

¹¹ C. Van der Ven, *Food Security in the African Continental Free Trade Area Legal framework*, in: D. Luke (ed.), *How Africa Eats: Trade, Food Security and Climate Risks*, London 2025, pp. 159–186; M. Dube, *Leveraging Services Trade Liberalization for Enhanced Food Security in the Southern Africa Development Community*, Winnipeg 2012.

play a central role in developing agricultural policies and monitoring their implementation, while the Ministry of Urban Planning, Housing and Regional Development is responsible for land management and urban planning.

Other organisations, among them the National Agency for Rural Promotion and Agricultural Advice (ANPROCA), support farmers by providing technical assistance and work towards securing access to natural resources. However, these institutions often suffer from a lack of coordination and resources, which is a major problem that limits the effectiveness of the measures implemented and exacerbates the challenges related to land governance and food production in Guinea.

2. Commodification of land and land insecurity in Guinea

For several decades, the land system in Guinea has undergone a profound transformation, characterised by intense agricultural and mining investments, both domestic and foreign.¹² Their development is part of a broader framework of market liberalisation and increased competition for access to natural resources, fostered by economic policies that encourage the establishment of private actors in the land and extractive sectors.¹³ The rise of large agribusiness and mining companies has led to accelerated land grabbing, frequently to the detriment of smallholder farmers and rural communities. While these investments are seen as a lever for economic development, they are nevertheless accompanied by profound socio-economic and environmental repercussions. In the absence of sufficiently protective regulatory mechanisms, the massive granting of land concessions to private companies has led to the forced displacement of rural populations, frequently carried out without fair compensation or adequate resettlement solutions, thus greatly magnifying the precariousness and vulnerability of these communities.

¹² A multi-stakeholder dialogue on the design and development of land reforms was established in Guinea with the organisation of the Estates General on Land for the Ministry of Cities and Regional Planning with funding from the European Union and the study of agricultural and rural land (carried out in 2016 by GRET/INSUCO) on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture with funding from the AFD. M. Diop, *Réformes foncières et gestion des ressources naturelles en Guinée. Enjeux de patrimonialité et de propriété dans le Timbi au Fouta Djallon*, Karthala – Paris 2007.

¹³ S. Boni, *Understanding the Spirit of Law No. 98-750 of 23 December 1998 on the Rural Land Code in Côte d'Ivoire*, 2015, <https://shs.hal.science/hal-01116550/> [accessed on 15.06.2025].

The sharp decline in land available for family farming, that is still the primary source of subsistence and food security for much of the Guinean population, has fuelled the escalation of land conflicts which are often acts of opposition of local communities and investors to a State whose management of land resources is widely seen as opaque and skewed toward private economic interests. These land tensions highlight the shortcomings of the legal and institutional framework for securing land use and ownership rights. In the face of these challenges, more inclusive land governance and better coordination between productive investments and the protection of local populations' rights are imperatives for ensuring sustainable and equitable development in Guinea.

2.1. Land grabbing and marginalisation of small farmers

In recent years, land deals and transactions in Africa have garnered considerable political and scholarly attention, often characterised by a highly critical perspective. Southern countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, often perceived as land-abundant yet underutilised, have become focal points of a global land rush involving both domestic and international actors. The existing literature on land grabbing is replete with accounts of transactions exhibiting varying degrees of transparency, encompassing confirmed and unconfirmed deals, coercive practices, allocations and dispossession, as well as instances of land redistribution and employment generation. Land grabbing in Guinea is often presented as a strategic tool to attract foreign investment, modernise the agricultural sector, and enhance development infrastructure. This, however, also brings about the progressive marginalisation of small producers who, despite cultivating these lands for generations, generally lack legal land titles guaranteeing their ownership or use rights. This land insecurity exposes them to increased risks of expropriation and forced displacement, often without adequate compensation.

There are several structural and institutional factors that worsen this trend. One is a dualistic land tenure system, where customary and modern law coexist, creating legal ambiguities that investors exploit to appropriate land to the detriment of the traditional rights of local communities. Another is institutional weakness characterised by the absence of a reliable national land registry, a lack of transparency in land allocation, and corrupt practices that foster an inequitable redistribution of land resources. Insufficient legal protection for farmers who, due to an inadequate or poorly enforced legal

framework, see their land rights systematically violated with no possibility of effective recourse, is another problem. The resulting exclusion of smallholder farmers has profound consequences for the rural socio-economic fabric. Indeed, the reallocation of fertile land to export crops or non-agricultural projects (mining, industrial infrastructure) significantly reduces the areas dedicated to subsistence farming, thus threatening the country's food security. This approach strips local populations of their livelihoods, amplifies precariousness, undermines rural communities, and intensifies land-related tensions.

Therefore, a thorough reform of the legal and institutional framework appears essential to reconcile economic attractiveness and the protection of local populations' land rights, to ensure sustainable and inclusive development in Guinea.

2.2. Regulation and shortcomings in the legal framework for land management

Although Guinea has a relatively comprehensive legal framework governing land management, its effective implementation remains largely hampered by multiple institutional, legal, and socio-economic obstacles. The 1992 Land and Property Law¹⁴ recognises the right to private property and the role of local authorities in that respect and as such constitutes a legal basis for land management. However, its implementation remains problematic, particularly due to the ineffectiveness of enforcement mechanisms and the absence of coercive measures to ensure respect for the rights set out.

The main gaps in the legal framework lie in several crucial areas. First, there is a lack of formal recognition of customary land rights which nevertheless govern access to land for a large majority of the population, thus creating a dissonance between written law and local practices. This situation is particularly challenging for rural communities and individuals seeking to secure land ownership, as they often become vulnerable to the influence of investors and public authorities. Second, the highly complex and opaque administrative system presents a significant challenge for smallholder farmers who struggle to obtain formal titles to their land. Red tape combined with

¹⁴ Land and Property Code in the Republic of Guinea, Ordinance No. 92-19 of 30 March 1992, Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, Rome, 11 May 2012, Spec. item 3.2 CFS, 37th Session, Rome 17–22 October 2011, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/023/mc122f.pdf> [accessed on 15.06.2025]; The mining sector is governed by Law No. 2011-06 of 9 September 2011, establishing the Mining Code of the Republic of Guinea, as amended by Law No. 2013-53 of 8 April 2013.

a lack of transparency and resources creates an environment where access to land for the poorest remains greatly limited. Finally, the absence of clear and practical legal mechanisms to prevent and combat land grabbing, a growing phenomenon due to agricultural and mining investments, exposes local populations to abuses, particularly in the form of land grabbing or expropriation without adequate compensation. The effectiveness of the right to food in Guinea, directly linked to land dynamics, remains deeply compromised by the accelerated commodification of land and the negative impacts of economic globalisation. Indeed, although foreign investment may play a significant role in economic development, its massive arrival, without adequate regulation, risks further precariousness for the land and food security of local populations. Industrial agriculture or mining projects, often linked to land grabbing processes, lead to the shortening of the availability of agricultural land and disrupt traditional agricultural practices, causing food instability within rural communities.

To ensure food security and social justice in Guinea, it is imperative to implement more inclusive and equitable land governance. This requires recognising and securing customary land rights, streamlining administrative procedures, and establishing effective protection mechanisms against land grabbing. Furthermore, the adoption of agricultural policies focused on self-sufficiency prioritising local production and strengthening the resilience of communities in the face of global economic crises, proves to be a strategic priority. Finally, the recognition of the rights of rural populations, particularly regarding their participation in land decisions, is essential for the establishment of a fair and sustainable land system in Guinea.

3. Economic globalisation and its implications for food security in the West Africa context

Economic globalisation is defined as a process of intensification of trade, capital flows, goods, services, and information on a global scale, fostered by the development of communication technologies, the liberalisation of markets, and the increasing integration of national economies into a globalised system.¹⁵ This phenomenon has redefined profoundly the economic

¹⁵ G. Rabu, *Law and Globalization: Macro-Elements of Convergence between Legal Orders*, "Revue internationale de droit économique" 2008, no. 3, pp. 335–356; A. Diabaté, *Les droits fondamentaux à l'épreuve de la marchandisation de la terre et de l'aliment dans un contexte de mondialisation économique en Afrique de l'Ouest*, "Revue Internationale de Droit et Science Politique" 2024, vol. 4, no. 11, pp. 96–127; C. Jourdain-Fortier, V. Pironon,

and social structures throughout the world, notably by modifying the modes of production, consumption, and distribution, including in strategic sectors such as agriculture.

In the agricultural sector, globalisation has had mixed effects. On the one hand, it has enabled significant advances, including improved yields due to the diffusion of modern technologies, increased agricultural trade, and an influx of foreign direct investment, particularly in developing countries. These dynamics have contributed, in some cases, to modernising agricultural production systems, thus stimulating rural economic growth and creating export opportunities. However, these benefits are accompanied by profound imbalances. By promoting a logic of competitiveness and specialisation of crops intended for export, globalisation tends to weaken local food systems that are often less competitive and geared towards self-consumption or local markets. An increased dependence on international markets exposes countries to sharp fluctuations in food prices and external shocks, jeopardising the food security of the most vulnerable populations. Furthermore, this process raises questions about food sovereignty understood as the right of peoples to define their own agricultural and food policies, to protect their local production, and to ensure equitable access to land, seeds, and natural resources.

The land grabbing of agricultural land effected by multinational companies or foreign investors and encouraged by land liberalisation compromises the ability of rural communities to produce their own food and maintain food autonomy. Thus, although economic globalisation has opened new prospects for agricultural development, it raises serious questions about its impacts on the equity, sustainability, and self-determination of food systems. These tensions necessitate critical reflection on regulatory mechanisms, agricultural policies, and local alternatives that can preserve food sovereignty in a globalised world.

3.1. Concentration of agricultural resources and dependence on global markets

One of the notable effects of economic globalisation on the agricultural sector is the concentration of land resources and food production in the hands of large multinational companies. These companies, often motivated by global economic considerations, seek out low-cost production areas to

maximise their profits.¹⁶ This results in land grabbing, the acquisition of agricultural land by foreign investors or transnational corporations, which is seriously detrimental to the situation and well-being of local producers. Rural communities, deprived of land and resources, see these processes as greatly compromising their food security. Furthermore, small-scale farms, often integrated into global trade circuits, are becoming increasingly dependent on fluctuations in global food prices. This dependence makes many African countries vulnerable to global economic crises, such as increases in commodity prices or disruptions in supply chains due to international crises. As a result, the most fragile of them find themselves in a situation where their ability to guarantee sufficient food for their populations is largely conditioned by external factors.

3.2. Impact on family and local farming

In many regions of the world, particularly in Africa, family farming remains a key pillar of food production. However, globalisation has often marginalised these agricultural systems in favour of export-oriented agro-industrial models. The introduction of large-scale monocultures, export crops, and genetically modified seeds is profoundly altering local agricultural structures, with adverse impacts on biodiversity, traditional knowledge, and community resilience to climate change. Family farms which play a crucial role in local food production, are thus weakened by increased competition from low-cost imported products. Due to higher production costs, local agricultural products struggle to compete with those from developed countries that are subsidised. This phenomenon not only leads to an erosion of food diversity but also to increased dependence on imports, which further reduces the food sovereignty of nations.

3.3. Natural resource grabbing and environmental impacts

Economic globalisation has led to the intensive exploitation of natural resources, particularly land and water, as these are pursued in an effort to meet the ever-growing global demand for agricultural products. This increased exploitation, combined with the widespread application of modern

¹⁶ L. Cotula et al., *Testing claims about large land deals in Africa: Findings from a multi-country study*, "Journal of Development Studies" 2014, vol. 50, no. 7, pp. 903–925; P. Woodhouse, *New investment, old challenges: land deals and the water constraint in African agriculture*, "Journal of Peasant Studies" 2012, vol. 39, no. 3–4, pp. 777–794.

agricultural techniques (including the use of pesticides, chemical fertilisers, and intensive irrigation), has led to multiple negative environmental consequences, including soil degradation, water pollution, and biodiversity loss.

In the long term, in the face of climate challenges, these changes hinder countries' ability to maintain sustainable and resilient agricultural production. Furthermore, the effects of climate change, exacerbated by global economic activity, have a direct impact on local food systems. Extreme weather events, such as droughts, floods, and heatwaves, have dramatic consequences for agricultural production, jeopardising the livelihoods of rural communities. Growing dependence on imported agricultural products, which are also often more vulnerable to global climate fluctuations, makes nations even more susceptible to external shocks.

3.4. The role of national and international agricultural policies

Faced with these challenges, governments must implement agricultural policies that support local production, protect vulnerable producers, and guarantee access to healthy and sustainable food for all populations.¹⁷ This involves establishing mechanisms that ensure secure land tenure, sustainable management of natural resources, and diversification of agricultural production. At the international level, it is necessary to rethink trade agreements and global agricultural policies to enable true food sovereignty. Free trade agreements, which often favour the interests of large multinationals to the detriment of local farmers, should be revisited. On the other hand, initiatives such as a smallholder agriculture, organic farming, or short distribution chains may provide interesting alternatives to strengthen the resilience of local food systems and limit the impacts of globalisation on food security. Economic globalisation has certainly brought development opportunities, but it has also intensified challenges related to food sovereignty, particularly for developing countries. As already mentioned, land grabbing that increases dependence on

¹⁷ Law No. 2008-03 of April 30, 2008, enacting the Framework Law on Urban Planning and Land Development. This Framework Law on Urban Planning and Land Development establishes the basic rules and procedures for urban planning, operational urban development, and the regulation of urban land use. The Declaration on Rural Land Policy (D/2001/07/PRG/SGG) was drafted by the SNRFR of the Ministry of Agriculture (adopting the rural land policy), signed in Conakry on 7 May 2001; Forestry Code of the Republic of Guinea, Law No. L/99/013/AN of 22 June 1999; Pastoral Code of the Republic of Guinea, Law No. L/95/51/CTRN of 29 August 1995; Water Code of the Republic of Guinea, Law No. L/94/005/CTRN of 15 February 1994; Local Government Code of the Republic of Guinea, revised by Law No. L/2017/040/AN of 24 February 2017.

global markets and environmental impacts poses major threats to peoples' food security in Africa. It is therefore imperative to adopt an approach that prioritises sustainable agricultural models, strengthens local capacities and ensures responsible management of natural resources, while ensuring that national and international policies support the food sovereignty of nations.

4. Legislative reforms for inclusive land governance in Guinea

The primary challenge facing future land governance reforms in Guinea lies in the recognition, respect, and protection of customary land rights.¹⁸ Addressing this challenge effectively requires the State to consider adoption of a comprehensive rural land code that would incorporate innovative provisions on land ownership. Such a legal framework would aim to bridge customary practices and modern law, providing local communities with formalised land documents, including property ownership certificates and certificates confirming possession of customary land rights. These documents should be easily accessible, enforceable against third parties, and fully recognised by national legal instruments, and would mirror the successful approaches implemented in countries like Mali.¹⁹

However, the formal guarantees offered by national and international legal frameworks alone are insufficient to ensure equitable access to land, particularly for women in rural areas. In practice, social norms, cultural practices, and entrenched gender biases often act as barriers, limiting women's effective access to land resources. Therefore, beyond legal recognition, reform efforts must actively address these socio-cultural constraints.

¹⁸ In Guinea, land legislation and successive reform processes have shown their limitations in the face of the multiplication of large-scale projects for the exploitation of land and natural resources in rural areas. M. Diop, *Réformes foncières...*; This is precisely the spirit and the letter of Decree No. 027-PRG- of 20 February 1961, requiring landowners to develop their plots see Official Gazette of 1 March 1961, p. 86.

¹⁹ See in particular the 2020 Guinean Constitution (Articles 1, 9 and 16), the Civil Code (particularly on inheritance law) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). Strategically designed land reform programs aim to promote women's land rights in many developing countries. Gender-based discrimination in land inheritance together with economic and social marginalisation is difficult to disentangle in communities and they can influence the impact of customary land reforms on women's land rights and their subsequent empowerment; Law no. 2017-001 of 11 April 2017 on agricultural land in Mali, Articles 9, 11 and 16.

Integrating customary law into new legal instruments must be done carefully, ensuring that it does not conflict with fundamental principles of equality. All land policies in Guinea must strive to balance respect for traditional practices with the demands of modern legislation, particularly in ways that safeguard and enhance women's land rights. Achieving this balance is crucial for promoting equitable, inclusive, and sustainable land governance across the country.

4.1. Recognition and security of customary land rights

One of the fundamental aspects of inclusive land governance is the recognition and security of customary land rights which govern access to land for a large majority of the population, particularly in rural areas. In many contexts, traditional land tenure systems are often perceived as informal or not recognised by national laws, exposing local populations to the risk of expropriation or dispossession of their land. These rights, although rooted in long-standing practices, do not always enjoy the same legal protection as private property rights. Legislative reforms must work to integrate these customary rights into national legal systems, while ensuring their compatibility with the principles of social justice and sustainability. Such integration requires a revision of national land laws to formally recognise the rights of local communities and provide them with a legal framework to protect them against abuse. Furthermore, it is essential to promote a land registration system that enables local communities to obtain land titles or certificates of ownership, thereby providing them with legal security and access to credit or subsidies for development.

4.2. Inclusive participation in land management

Inclusive land governance cannot be effective without the broad participation of various stakeholders that also include marginalised groups such as women, indigenous peoples and youth, who are often excluded from decision-making processes. Legislative reforms must establish mechanisms for the active participation of these groups in land management, through public consultations, advisory committees, or local assemblies. Ensuring gender equality in access to and control over land is particularly important. In many countries, women face structural barriers that prevent them from inheriting, owning, or managing land. Reforms must therefore include specific legal measures for land equality, such as legislative provisions that

ensure gender equality in the transmission of land rights, protection of the land rights of widows and orphans, and the establishment of land policies that promote women's participation in land-related decision-making. Inclusive land management must also include the creation of land conflict resolution mechanisms. In many parts of the world, land conflicts are common and have dramatic consequences for social cohesion and economic stability. These conflicts may arise from unclear land rights, competition for land use, or contested property titles.

Legislative reforms must establish effective and accessible conflict resolution mechanisms that integrate both formal (land tribunals, legal mediation) and informal (traditional mediation, community arbitration) methods. The goal is to reduce social tensions, protect the rights of those affected by land conflicts, and ensure peaceful and equitable land management. Inclusive land governance also requires a transparent and accountable system for managing land resources. Corruption, mismanagement, and a lack of transparency in land allocation and titling are recurring problems in many countries. Legislative reforms must ensure the establishment of rigorous control and monitoring mechanisms to ensure transparency in land distribution and access to land titles. Open land allocation processes that allow citizens to access information on land transactions and actively participate in decision-making are crucial in combating abuses and ensuring that the land rights of local populations, particularly the most vulnerable, are respected. Reforms must also include sanctions for land rights violations or corrupt practices to strengthen citizens' trust in land institutions.

Legislative reforms must also align with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to ending poverty (SDG 1), achieving zero hunger (SDG 2), promoting gender equality (SDG 5), ensuring access to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), and reducing inequalities (SDG 10). Inclusive land governance must not only be about equitable land distribution, but also about integrating the principles of environmental sustainability and social justice into natural resource management. This requires the adoption of laws that promote sustainable land use, protect ecosystems, and ensure inclusive and environmentally friendly rural development. To sum up, legislative reforms in inclusive land governance are crucial to ensuring equitable and sustainable land management. They must recognise and protect community land rights, enable the participation of all stakeholders, establish mechanisms for resolving land disputes, and strengthen the transparency and accountability of public authorities. These reforms must be designed with a view to sustainable development and social justice in mind, to guarantee

long-term land security, social cohesion, and prosperity for rural populations, while contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Conclusion

Globalisation has a significant impact on food security in West Africa. While it facilitates access to a greater diversity of products and investment, it weakens local agriculture through competition from imports and a shift toward exports. This leads to a decline in food crops, a rural exodus of young people, increased dependence on global markets, and vulnerability to crises and price fluctuations. To address this, it is crucial to strengthen food self-sufficiency, protect local agricultural sectors, and promote rural development to ensure the region's economic and social stability.

In West Africa, and particularly in Guinea, land access and management are characterised by profound regulatory ambiguity which has significant socio-political and economic implications. Various stakeholders, including customary authorities, local communities, private investors, and state institutions, selectively refer to the rules or norms that best serve their interests, resulting in a proliferation of practices that are often contradictory. The results of this study demonstrate that, regardless of the standard invoked, land management practices remain highly diverse, fragmented, and often context specific.

This lack of regulatory harmonisation contributes directly to the emergence of inappropriate or unsustainable practices and encourages illicit transactions in the land sector. Such dynamics not only threaten equitable land distribution but also exacerbate social tensions, undermine local governance, and compromise economic development. Upon examination the range of management approaches observed in the field, this article highlights the complex interplay between formal legal frameworks, customary norms, and informal practices in shaping land governance outcomes.

A key contribution of this work is the creation of a space for critical reflection on land governance in Guinea, a country under intense demographic, urban, and agricultural pressures. The study highlights that these pressures emerge in a context lacking a clear, unified regulatory framework that serves as a common reference for all stakeholders. The absence of such a framework perpetuates uncertainty, limits accountability, and constrains efforts to achieve sustainable, transparent, and socially inclusive land management. Ultimately, understanding these governance gaps is crucial for designing

interventions that reconcile diverse interests and foster more coherent, equitable, and efficient land administration in Guinea.

Ultimately, the global food system is at a critical juncture, and West Africa illustrates its most acute vulnerabilities. The convergence of climate shocks, armed conflicts, and economic stagnation highlights a structural fragility that goes beyond the regional framework to become part of a continental and even global security issue. Food, as a vital and strategic resource, may be destabilising vector when compromised, but it also holds considerable potential for social cohesion, peace, and stability when it is sustainably secured. Faced with this reality, it is becoming imperative to move beyond the conception of food security as a simple development issue and fully integrate it into defense, diplomatic, and economic governance strategies. This requires strengthening regional and international policies around climate-resilient agriculture, supporting youth employment in the agricultural sector, regulating access to land, preventing conflicts related to natural resources, and improving the integration of regional markets. The establishment of early warning systems, the protection of strategic agricultural areas, and crop diversification are also priorities for strengthening the resilience of food systems. Ultimately, the West African experience, in general, and the Guinean case in particular, serve as a warning signal for the international community. In a deeply interconnected world, food insecurity, regardless of its location, generates systemic risks that could compromise global stability. Securing food systems sustainably must therefore be considered an essential pillar of peace and security in the 21st century.

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