Call for PhD applications

*Follow the Food: Dutch agribusiness and local food security in Ethiopia, Ghana and Kenya*

**Background to the call**

The research consortium consisting of International Development Studies (Utrecht University, the Netherlands), St. Mary’s University (Ethiopia), Solidaridad (the Netherlands, Ghana and Kenya) and Fair & Sustainable Advisory Services (the Netherlands and Ethiopia) has recently been awarded an NWO-WOTRO grant for a 4-year research programme.

This research programme aims to assess the effects of private agribusiness investments in African agriculture on local food security (a more elaborate description of the research programme can be found in annex 1 to this call).

In the framework of this programme, we will initiate two PhD projects related to the following research scope:

*The PhD projects will assess the effects of private agribusiness investments in African agriculture on local food security. How can private companies foster inclusive and sustainable development, including increased food security, for smallholders and poor populations?*

*We will seek answers to the above question by comparing a variety of Dutch private investment cases in selected regions in Ethiopia, Kenya and Ghana. These investment cases will be selected based on their inclusion of smallholders (i.e. farmer groups, contract farming, independent) and different food crops, looking at their end market (e.g. local or export market).*

*The two PhD projects should contribute to a better understanding of the links between agribusiness investments and local food security as mediated through business characteristics (i.e., business models and value chain), (changing) resource use and the functioning of local (urban) food markets. As such, the projects will investigate three impact pathways:*

1. Impact on local people directly involved in production;
2. Impact on local people not directly involved in production;
3. Impact on local (urban) food markets and consumers.

The research programme has room to offer a 4-year scholarship to 1 PhD student, to work on a research project that will focus on Kenya (and may include Ghana for comparative analysis). The PhD student will be supervised by (co)promotors from Utrecht University (International Development Studies) and receive local support by Solidaridad East and Central Africa Expertise Center and Solidaridad West Africa.

This call is open to all persons interested who meet the requirements below.
**Requirements**
- You hold a degree (MSc) in Development Studies, Development Economics, Food Security, Agriculture, Agribusiness or any other academic field relevant for the research programme, which you obtained after January 1, 2010 and before January 1, 2015.

*And all of the following:*
- Your research will lead to a PhD dissertation to be defended at the Faculty of Geosciences of Utrecht University;
- You are able to start to work on your PhD project not later than January 1, 2016.

**Scholarship specification**
The PhD scholarship will include the following:

- A PhD scholarship (1,0 fte) of an initial 12 months period. After a positive evaluation the scholarship will be extended to a maximum of 36 more months (a total of four years or 48 months maximum) with the specific intent that it will result in a doctorate at Utrecht University within this period;
- The PhD student will receive a monthly allowance (approx. €1000,-);
- Costs for fieldwork (travel) and meetings with (co)promoters in the Netherlands will be reimbursed;
- The PhD student will be based in Kenya (and Ghana) (approx. 10 months per year) and the Netherlands (approx. 2 months per year).

**Application**
To apply for a PhD scholarship, you must submit the following documents, in this order:
- a letter explaining your motivation for applying and how you fulfil the requirements;
- the Follow the Food PhD Application Form, including a research proposal (see annex 2);
- your curriculum vitae, including the course transcript of your legalised Master’s degree or equivalent issued by the faculty student administration, and a list of your publications;
- contact details (name, affiliation, email and phone number) from at least two references, i.e. senior researchers you have worked with;
- if your native language is not English, please submit an official score report from the Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL).

**Submission**
The deadline for receipt of applications is Friday, November 13th, 2015. Proposals should be sent by e-mail (as a single *.pdf file) to dr. Bram van Helvoirt, b.j.vanhelvoirt@uu.nl
**Further selection procedure**

Selected candidates will be invited for a second selection round. This second round will consist of a face-to-face meeting with the admission board (consortium representatives). During an interview with the admission board, the candidates will present themselves and elaborate on their research plans.

*The second selection round meeting in Kenya will take place on: Friday, November 27th (Nairobi, location tbd).*

Further information on the organisation of the second selection round will be provided to the selected candidates well in advance to the meeting.

**More information**

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Annex 1. Follow the Food Research Programme – description

a) Background and rationale

"Due to our extensive knowledge on agriculture, our innovative private sector and excellent international reputation, the Netherlands is in a position to make an important contribution to global food security."\(^1\)

As this quote from a recent Dutch policy note illustrates, food security is often presented as a global issue that requires strong private sector investments to solve existing supply-demand imbalances and unsustainable production defects. In the wake of the 2007-2008 food crisis, and exacerbated by the rush for biofuels and a growing world population to be fed by finite natural resources, the search for a global food system\(^2\) that can deliver sustainable and equitable global food security (i.e. ensuring that every man, woman and child enjoy their Right to Adequate Food) is high on international business and policy agendas.\(^3\) While this has spurred foreign investments in resource-abundant developing countries to boost food production for global markets, little is known about how these investments affect local food insecurity in the recipient countries. This conflict in levels of scale is particularly relevant in Africa, where (foreign) investments in agribusiness have recently increased significantly and vie for natural resources\(^4\) used for local livelihoods and food security.

Concurrently, responsible and inclusive business have become buzzwords in the business and development discourse as insertion of local populations – particularly smallholders - into global and domestic agricultural value chains is expected to offer opportunities for linking local development with increasing food production.\(^5\) After all, small-scale farms feed up to 80 per cent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, manage a large share of natural resources and ecosystems, and support the livelihoods of over 2 billion people.\(^6\) Nonetheless, the impacts of new private agribusiness investments on local livelihoods and food security are poorly understood, especially in terms of indirect effects through chain reorganization and food market changes. The impact pathway is complex and not automatic, particularly with respect to women and young/elderly generations.\(^7\) A direct pathway towards food security is assumed through either employment (wages) or smallholder inclusion in supply chains, but this claim has not been supported by evidence. In reality, much more complex dynamics can take place, including displacement of local food supplies when land is converted for non-local cash crops, crowding out of subsistence farming that is not always compensated by income from wages, and indirect effects of chain reorganization and changes in local (urban) food markets. We will consider both these direct and indirect impacts.

b) Objective(s)

The aim of this project is to enhance food security in Ghana, Ethiopia and Kenya through targeted advice for (Dutch) agribusiness investors, policy makers and other stakeholders in the three countries on the possible impact pathways from global agribusiness investments to local food security, and the risks and opportunities involved.

The knowledge aim is to assess the effects of private agribusiness investments in African agriculture on local food security. Three types of businesses models have been identified, based on their inclusion of smallholders and their organization and integration in (global) food chains: smallholders organized in farmer groups and associations; systems of out-growers and contract farming; and independent smallholders. The classification covers some of the main business models of private investment assumed to be inclusive.\(^8\) However, none of these models is homogeneous in characteristics and success factors\(^9\),

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\(^1\) Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Netherlands (2014). Letter to Dutch Parliament on the Dutch approach for global food security. The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Netherlands


\(^7\) KIT (Royal Tropical Institute) (2013). Policy Brief Food Security No 3: Monitoring private sector impacts on rural food and nutrition security (April 2013). Amsterdam: KIT

hence this study will compare across but also within these models. The business models are analyzed in combination with different crops, based on their end-market:

1. Traditional export crops (coffee, cocoa); often produced by smallholders organized in farmer associations or unorganized, but also on plantations
2. Non-traditional export crops (vegetables); capital intensive, high potential for employment and income generation. Also destined for local (urban) markets
3. Traditional staple crops (maize, sorghum, barley): mostly smallholder production, including subsistence farming, for domestic consumption and processing

Hence we compare six crops along the domestic – export market continuum. The crops are selected on importance in terms of numbers of producers, contribution to income and food security, fit with the business models, and involvement of Dutch players. The study will clarify the links between agribusiness investment and local food security as mediated through business characteristics (i.e., business models and value chain), (changing) resource use and the functioning of local (urban) food markets. This implies that we investigate three impact pathways of agribusiness investments on local food security:

1. Impact on local people directly involved in production (i.e. production and/or income effects, market access)
2. Impact on local people not directly involved in production, e.g. through changing resource use and land conversion
3. Impact on local (urban) food markets and consumers indirectly affected through changing food availability (e.g. product offering and quality, marketing) and prices

We do this by comparing a variety of Dutch and related private investment cases in Africa. Dutch agribusiness firms are prominent foreign investors on the African continent, and current Dutch development policy emphasizes the pivotal role of the Dutch agro-food industry in addressing global food insecurity, based on its broad expertise and experience. Our ultimate concern is how Dutch companies may foster inclusive and sustainable development, including increased food security, for smallholders and poor populations.

Figure 1: overview of research areas, crops and business models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of organisation and integration into value chains</th>
<th>Ethiopia (Sidama region)</th>
<th>Ghana (Ashanti region)</th>
<th>Kenya (Embu region)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Farmer groups and associations</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Cacao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organised and integrated</td>
<td>Maize/sorghum/barley</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Out-growers and contract farmers</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Cacao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent and connected</td>
<td>Maize/sorghum/barley</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent smallholders</td>
<td>Maize/sorghum/barley</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unorganised and not connected</td>
<td>Maize/sorghum/barley</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Dutch-related refers to investments with some link to the Netherlands, e.g. investments promoted by Dutch policy or NGOs, or financed by Dutch banks
c) Research and innovation questions and methods
This project focuses on the ‘development of inclusive business models’ dimension. We will compare agribusiness projects in different crops and business models across Ghana, Kenya and Ethiopia. These countries are prominent targets for global food investments, while at the same time, suffering from persistent local food insecurity (especially Ethiopia). In addition, they have been selected on their comparability in terms of crops produced and traded, the involvement of Dutch actors in local agribusiness, and engagement of Dutch (development) policy in food security via local Dutch embassies. Furthermore, the three countries have distinct institutional settings in terms of agricultural investment and food security policies, enabling analysis of potential policy effects on local food security (and policy advice). In each country one region has been selected based on the prevalence of local food insecurity, and the crops and business models mentioned.

Consortium partners already are active in these countries; St. Mary’s University and Fair & Sustainable Advisory Services (FSAS) work in Ethiopia while Solidaridad operates in East and West Africa through their offices in Kenya, Ethiopia and Ghana.

Main question:
How can Dutch agribusiness contribute to global food security through involvement in African agribusiness while also enhancing local food security?

Research sub-questions:

A) What changes in terms of production, cropping patterns, natural resource use (land, water), and market orientation (destination) of produce take place as a result of Dutch and related agribusiness investments?

B) What is the effect of Dutch and related agribusiness investment on employment, income and market access for local people directly involved in the projects (workers, smallholders)?

C) What is the effect of Dutch and related agribusiness investments on local/regional food markets in the research areas? Is there (continued) multi-cropping or specialization in production? What (changes in) food flows result from the investments and what is the impact on food prices?

D) What are the impacts of the observed dynamics in food production, marketing and trade for food security of the stakeholder groups identified, within households (gender differences, age groups), at the community level (employees, included smallholders, others) and other groups (consumers through local markets)?

The concept of food security has four dimensions: (1) physical availability of food, determined by production, stock levels and net trade; (2) access to food, mediated by incomes, markets and prices; (3) food utilization, i.e. food baskets and diets that determine the nutritional status of individuals; and (4) stability of these three dimensions over time, accounting for periodic food insecurity due to external shocks (e.g. adverse weather conditions or rising prices). The project will investigate these four dimensions at different levels, ranging from community to household and individual level. We will analyze how foreign investments in agro-business models vary in terms of inclusiveness and impact on local food security. The link between the inclusiveness of the business model and food security of the farming population involved and the non-involved members of the local community are then investigated. Is the right to adequate food an integral part of inclusive business practices? And how does it affect local markets through a chain of effects on income, employment, local businesses and prices?

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12 FAO (2008): An introduction into the basic concepts of food security. Rome,: FAO.
Figure 2. Conceptual model

Methodology

Table 1 describes the methods and types and level of analysis used per sub-question. Kick-off meetings will identify clusters of Dutch agro-investment from which a selection is made of 1 or 2 companies per crop that have started in the last 5 years or so (staged cluster sampling). These companies will be analyzed in terms of linkages, value chain dynamics, business strategies and CSR performance. In each cluster, some 50 production workers (employees, smallholders) are selected by random sampling for a survey of changes resulting from the investment projects – consumption patterns, crop changes, food access etc.

By bringing quantitative and GIS mapping data together on an online platform (e.g. Akvo), researchers will be able to compare data from the three regions and countries directly. Particularly the postdoc researcher will enhance a generalized analysis of the three countries and different crops, allowing generalization on the links between foreign investments and food security in Africa.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research subquestion</th>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Desk study, secondary data analysis (e.g. market statistics, demographic statistics, media, policy reports)</th>
<th>Validation workshops</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Indicators / type of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Direct observation / secondary data</td>
<td>Validation workshops</td>
<td>Interviews with business owners, in-depth interviews with smallholders, cooperatives, business owners, experts, focus group discussions &amp; participatory methods</td>
<td>Access / use / ownership / governance analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Household</td>
<td>Panel survey (gender- and generation - disaggregated) at start &amp; end of the project</td>
<td></td>
<td>In-depth interviews with smallholders, cooperatives, business owners, experts, focus group discussions &amp; participatory methods</td>
<td>Income/employment/livelihoods Ownership – voice – risk – reward analysis (measuring degree of inclusiveness)&lt;sup&gt;13&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Panel survey (gender- and generation - disaggregated) at start &amp; end of the project</td>
<td>Key informant interviews</td>
<td>Key informant interviews with business owners, traders, experts, in-depth interviews with smallholders, cooperatives, business owners, experts, focus group discussions &amp; participatory methods</td>
<td>Market analysis (Bottom of the Pyramid) Consumer preference analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional*</td>
<td>Panel survey (gender- and generation - disaggregated) at start &amp; end of the project</td>
<td>Key informant interviews (e.g. business owners, traders, experts), survey of consumers</td>
<td>Market analysis (Bottom of the Pyramid) Consumer preference analysis</td>
<td>Household level food insecurity scale Dietary diversity scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Panel survey (gender- and generation - disaggregated) at start &amp; end of the project</td>
<td>Key informant interviews (e.g. policy makers, experts) literature &amp; document research</td>
<td>Market analysis (Bottom of the Pyramid) Consumer preference analysis</td>
<td>Policy analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout: role of policy</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Key informant interviews (e.g. policy makers, experts) literature &amp; document research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Key informant interviews (e.g. policy makers, experts) literature &amp; document research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Methodology
* mainly based in the main urban center of each region

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Annex 2. Follow the Food PhD Application Form

Personal details

1. Applicant PhD Student
Title(s), initial(s), and surname:
Address:
Phone:
E-mail:

PhD Research Proposal

2. Title
(max. 15 words)

3. Summary
(max. 250 words)

4. Brief description of research proposal
(approx. 1000 words - no more than approx. 2 pages, including illustrations, references, work plan and footnotes -, using the following structure)

4a. Introduction

4b. Research outline (initial analysis of research themes/research ideas)

4c. Methods/Approach

4d. Plan of work (2016-2019)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Research activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Signature

Place:

Date:

Signature of applicant:

* The PhD research project will start shortly after the final PhD candidate selection rounds in November/December 2015.