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Land control and crop booms *inside* China: implications for how we think about the global land rush

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to broaden the scope of analysis of the contemporary global land rush by examining crop booms not only outside, but inside China; and investment flows not only from China, but also within and into China. It does so by examining the eucalyptus and sugarcane sectors in southern China, which have witnessed investment booms during the past decade, with capital being infused by both domestic capital and foreign capital, including Finnish, Indonesian, and Thai companies. Our argument addresses three key issues: (a) explaining why foreign and domestic companies enter into a multitude of lease and grower contracts involving holders of micro-plots, (b) revisiting the notion of extra-economic coercion, and (c) a critique of thinking about flows of large-scale investments centred primarily on nationality. These issues are central in

current debates in the land grabs literature, and our study offers a different perspective from dominant narratives.

KEYWORDS:

BRICS China crop booms sugarcane eucalyptus land grabs

! View correction statement:

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Notes

1. Note that in March 2001, during the Asian debt crises, APP defaulted on its debt, most of which was subsequently rescheduled at lower values.
2. The exact figures of acreage and output for these different patterns in Guangxi are not available, but the official data show that in 2014, 656,300 mu land has been circled out and cleared for HSPB ('Guangxi Shuanggao', [2015](#)) and by the end of 2015, 992,500 mu, with the government grants reaching 1.798 billion RMB (Ministry of Land and Resource of PRC, [2016](#)).

3. For a relevant background discussion on migration and livelihoods, rural and urban, see van der Ploeg, Ye, and Pan ([2014](#)); for the dynamic interplay between land and labour, both rural and urban, see Chuang ([2015](#)), Andreas and Zhan ([2016](#)), Ho and Spoor ([2006](#)), and Ye ([2015](#)).

4. This decision was announced by the government's Central Rural Work Committee in October 1993. See CPC Central Committee and the State Council ([1993](#)).

5. For instance, in 1972 the price of sugarcane rose from 30.29 to 34.94 Yuan per tonne, but at the same time the price of sugar was unchanged. The production cost of sugar increased, and many sugar factories lost money (see Si, [2004](#)).

6. 1 mu equals to 1/15 ha.

7. For background on the politics of taxation, see Kennedy ([2007](#)).

8. The Arrangement Measures for Sugar EIT (Zhitangye Qiye Suodeshui Guanli Banfa), adopted by Guangxi autonomous region in 2009, is one of the most important regulations in the system of sugar taxation.

9. Interview with HLQ, an official in Nanhua Sugar Company, March 6, 2015, Fusui County.

10. Interview with Gan, a village leader, March 7, 2015, Fusui County.

11. Interview with HQZ, a village leader, January 5, 2016, Fusui County.

12. Interview with Huang, an official in Nanhua Sugar Company, March 7, 2015, Fusui County.

13. Interview with XP, an official in Nanhua Sugar Company, March 7, 2015, Fusui County.

14. Calculated from data on the FAOSTAT website.

15. Calculated from FAOSTAT website.

16. Interview with XP, an official in Nanhua Sugar Company, March 9, 2015, Fusui County.

17. Interview with LS, an official in Nanhua Sugar Company, January 9, 2016, Fusui County.

18. Interview with an office director, a technician and an accountant in one of the state farms. March 10, 2015. Fusui County.
19. In fact, Stora Enso's investment in this project began in late 2014.
20. Interview with an office director, a technician and an accountant in one of the state farms in Fusui County, March 10, 2015.

Additional information

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