

Land commercialisation for cashew cultivation and its implication for land disputes in the Wenchi Municipality, Ghana

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Abstract

Cashew cultivation has recently acquired an important position in Ghanaian smallholder farming. The cultivation and export of cashew have resulted in improved household income and social status while at the same time causing gendered and intergenerational tensions in access to land, with the potential for land disputes. This paper examines the tenurial arrangement on land for cashew cultivation and its implication for land disputes in the Wenchi Municipality. With data collected from 200 households and 30 key informants, the study revealed that land commercialisation for cashew cultivation triggers and amplifies land disputes, such as inheritance and boundary disputes. These disputes further affect the extent of rural agricultural investment and socio-economic development by destroying the rural moral economy, sustenance of livelihoods and the loss of lives and property through untitled land rights. To minimise land disputes in the community, the traditional leaders

and family heads should restructure land inheritance practices and educate the farmers to properly mark the boundary of the acquired land

before its use.

Keywords

Land commercialisation; Cashew cultivation; Land disputes; Smallholder farmers; Wenchi Municipality; Ghana.

Introduction

Over several decades, the global demand for land has ascended because the land is an essential resource for commercial agricultural investment and food production (Cotula, 2009). The increased demand for land can be attributed to population growth, urbanisation and rising income (Deininger, Byerlee, Lindsey, Norton, & Selod, 2011). Though large-scale land acquisition is not new (Thiombiano et al. 2017; Amanor 2009), the demand for land for commercial agriculture has expanded exponentially over the past decades. Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are often the prime targets of large scale land acquisition due to the relatively lower land prices, availability of under-utilised arable land, favourable climate for crop production, abundant water resource and availability of cheap labour (Thiombiano et al. 2017). Most of these land acquisitions occur in the context of customary tenure regimes (Boamah, 2014; Kugelman, 2012; Wily, 2011), which accounts for 70 percent of the land acquisitions (Deininger, 2003; Wily, 2011).

During colonial rule in Ghana, coercive tactics and incentive structures were used to acquire land for commercial agriculture to sustain the growing urban economy (Adu-Boahen, 2000). However, the commercialisation of agriculture in Ghana was mainly on a smallholder basis, with around 80 percent of land in Ghana being in the custody of customary authorities (Tsikata & Yaro, 2011; Kasanga & Kotey, 2001); hence, they play the most significant role in land ownership and use arrangements (Rood, 2017). Generally, the community (through stools, skins and clans) controls land in Ghana since it provides its members with food, employment, and accommodation (Maxwell, Larbi, Lamptey, Zakariah & Armar-Klemesu, 1998).

Even though smallholders generally dominate agricultural land use in Ghana (Chamberlin 2007), mainly for food crops production, it has been observed in recent years that the situation is rapidly changing in much of the country, including the Bono and Bono East Regions, from the production of food crops towards cashew cultivation (Teye et al., 2021; Kansanga et al., 2018; Tsikata & Yaro, 2014; Evans, Mariwah & Antwi, 2014). Cashew is considered one of the critical tree-nut crops in Ghana, ranking third in terms of the market in international trade after hard nuts, which constitute about 29 percent of the nation's cash crop export earnings (Ministry of Food and Agriculture, 2017). The first-ever record of nuts cashew export from Ghana was in 1991, amounting to 15 metric tonnes (Wongnaa & Ofori, 2012). Since then, export volumes of cashew have risen substantially: to 3,571 metric tonnes in 1997 and to 6,338 metric tonnes in

2003, peaking at 47,000 metric tonnes in 2006, contributing approximately \$23 million in foreign exchange earnings (Sarpong, 2011). In a more recent report, Ghana Export Promotion Authority (2020) has estimated that Ghana has an untapped cashew in-shell potential of over US\$ 600 million and that in 2019, the country exported about US\$ 391,401 worth of raw cashew in the shell to six countries across the globe, namely India, China, Vietnam, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom.

The contribution of the Bono, Bono East and Ahafo regions to the cashew subsector is evident in the number of processing plants in the region. For instance, of the 13 cashew processing plants in Ghana, 12 are located in the Bono, Bono East and Ahafo regions (Abdoulaye, Bamire, Akinola, & Etwire, 2017). Studies indicate an alarming rate of land need and use in the study region due to the high levels of cashew productivity (Wongnaa & Ofori, 2012). Specifically, evidence suggests an increasing demand for land for cashew cultivation in Nwoase by indigenes and migrants (MDA, 2015). This demand has led to high negotiations for available land in the community and its surrounding towns for cashew cultivation. Regulating the increasing demand for land for cashew cultivation in the region has been a social problem because farmers depend on it for survival (De Sherbinin, VanWey, McSweeney, Aggarwal, Barbieri, Henry & Walker, 2008).

In the Bono and Bono East Regions, commercialisation is driven by the increasing price and demand for cashew nut, cashew kernels and cashew nut shell liquid (Sarpong, 2011). Other factors responsible for expanding cashew cultivation in the Regions are favourable climate, suitable soil, and declining yield from food crops (Evans, et al., 2014). Declining yields from food crops and the expansion of cashew cultivation mean that little attention has been given to food crops grown on a small scale in the region, thereby putting food security at risk (CIAT, 2011; Evans, Mariwah & Antwi, 2015). The decline in food crop production (due to declining soil quality that does not support food crop production) has been identified as one of the factors contributing to the commercialisation of land for cashew cultivation (Mariwah, Evans and Antwi, 2019; Evans et al., 2015). Meanwhile, land commercialisation has been identified to positively and negatively affect households in rural and urban communities. Some of these effects include improved income, employment and basic social infrastructure, land disputes, inheritance problems, and the loss of land to future generations (Cotula; 2009; Larson, 2011).

Globally, land commercialisation is seen as purchasing, ownership and usage right to land on a short or long-term basis (Borras & Franco, 2012; Cotula, 2009). In this paper, land commercialisation entails giving communal land to individuals who cultivate cashew commercially through the tenurial arrangement of sharecropping (Baah & Kidido, 2020; Amanor, 2010). Multinational corporations and foreign governments are the key actors in land acquisition; evidence shows that local actors play immense roles in such transactions (Ghatak & Ghosh, 2011; Rose, 2002). In the Bono Region, especially

in the Wenchi Municipality and its neighbouring communities, local and foreign actors are acquiring land for agricultural production (Wongnaa & Ofori, 2012; Maxwell, 2011; Tsikata & Yaro, 2011). Although these acquisitions contribute positive outcomes such as improved income and social status for the residents, their implications on land disputes, particularly boundary and inheritance disputes, are a great concern (Otsuka & Place, 2014). From the loss of lives and property through untitled land rights, land commercialisation generates socio-economic, environmental, socio-cultural, political, demographic, and psychological consequences, which have a multitudinous impact on the livelihoods of urban and rural residents.

While the rapid expansion of cashew cultivation in the Bono and Bono East regions has increased land commercialisation (Mariwah et al., 2019), little is known about its implications for land disputes. We surmise that the commercialisation of land for cashew cultivation may distort the existing land tenure regime by inadvertently converting communal ownership of land to private ownership, thereby depriving the future generation of access to land and creating disputes within and between families. However, most studies on agricultural land disputes in Ghana have focused on landlord and migrant labour relations in share tenancies (Yelsang, 2013; Boni, 2008). Kasanga et al., (2018) and Kasanga and Kotey (2001) have explored ownership disputes while Yaro, Torvikey and Teye (2017) have delved into various models of agriculture commercialisation. However, the extant literature has not paid much attention to the implications of rapid commercialisation for land disputes. This study investigates the effects of land commercialisation on land disputes in a rural community of Nwoase in the Wenchi Municipality of the Bono Region, Ghana. This is particularly relevant because land disputes have been a major hindrance to its use, tenure security and the well-being of rural dwellers whose livelihoods depend mainly on access to land (Paaga, 2013).

Land Tenure Systems in Ghana

Currently, though the land in Ghana is mainly owned by stools (in the south) or skins (in the north) any of the following may legally own land: a family, individual or groups of individuals, a corporate body, or a state/public organisation (Baah & Kidido, 2020; Kasanga & Kotey, 2001). While communal lands account for about 80% of land holdings in Ghana, the arrangement for access to and use of land varies significantly across the various ethnic groups within the country. The following excerpts from the work of Kasanga and Kotey (2001:13) summarise the characteristics of customary or allodial land holdings in Ghana, revealing the spatial variations in land tenure and management:

In a substantial number of cases, the allodial title, beyond which there is no superior interest in land, is vested in communities – represented by stools and sub-stools in the Akan and some Ga communities, and by skins in the Northern Region. Chiefs who represent stools and skins execute judicial, governance and land

management functions. In the Upper West and Upper East regions, the allodial title holders are the 'tendamba' (first settlers) whilst in some of the Adangme (Greater Accra region), the Anlo (Volta region) and Adjumaku (Central region), the allodial title holders are families, clans or village communities. The position of every allodial titleholder of land in Ghana is that of a titular holder, holding the land in trust for the whole community.

These tenure regimes give collective land rights essential to individual livelihoods and hold a diversity of material and productive resources critical to individual and collective survival (Crowley & Carter, 2000). In this regard, access to land is mediated by customary law controlled by clan elders who allocate land, adjudicate conflicts over it, and regulate its use (Carter, Crowley & Mulogoli, 1998). In these tenure systems, access to land by non-land holding members for any purpose, including commercial agriculture, occurs through lease, trusteeship, rent, purchase, or sharecropping (Baah & Kidido, 2020).

However, land tenure systems in Ghana have evolved and changed significantly since the colonial era, primarily resulting from the need for commercial crop production during the colonial period (Yaro, Teye & Torvikey, 2018). Sharecropping is one of the most efficient mechanisms for acquiring agricultural land among migrants and the land-poor. This has been noted to contribute to the phenomenon of land commercialisation, as evident in the cultivation of cocoa and rubber in the Western region and oil palm in the Eastern and Volta regions of Ghana (Baah & Kidido, 2020; Amanor, 2012; Amanor, 2008; Amanor & Diderutuah, 2001; Laven, 2009).

Sharecropping under the purview of land acquisition is a dominant practice that involves a situation where a farmer acquires land from a landowner for the cultivation of crops and then shares the farm produce or even the land itself on contractual agreements with the landowner (Amanor, 2008; Nsiah-Gyabaah, 2000). The sharing mechanisms of *Abunu* and *Abusa* are the two basic forms of tenancies under sharecropping in Ghana (Amanor, 2008; Amanor and Diderutuah, 2001). "*Abunu*" refers to an arrangement where the farm produce is divided into two equal parts and shared between the farmer and the landowner. '*Abusa*' on the other hand, refers to the arrangement where the farm produce is divided into three equal parts, and the farmer takes two with the landowner taking one, or vice versa, depending on the nature of arrangement as to who makes more contribution towards the production of the crops.

According to Takane (2000), sharecropping was increasingly accompanied by written documents that govern the tenancy on the land or the plantation, its usage after maturity and transfer policies associated with the land. Amanor and Diderutuah (2001) investigated cocoa cultivation in the Western Region. They found that sharecropping on "land" implies that after the contractual arrangements on the land, the property on the land becomes the collective property of the parties involved. With sharecropping by

“plantation”, the tenant farmer leaves the land after the harvest season when the produce (plantation) has been shared on an agreement between the landowner and the tenant farmer (Amanor & Diderutuah, 2001; Takane, 2000).

On cocoa production in the Western Region, sharecropping by land contracts remained very popular compared to plantation variants primarily used in the Eastern and Volta regions. Upon maturity, the cocoa farms were more challenging to evaluate because old cocoa trees had no value (other than firewood) and could survive on the field at a low productive stage (Amanor, 2012). Landowners resorted to re-utilising their land to improve their livelihoods by felling the unproductive cocoa trees for firewood. Hence in the case of cocoa in the Western Region, the transfer of land in sharecropping was not “forever” but only for the life cycle of the plantation (Takane, 2000). Colin and Ruff (2009) also espoused oil palm production by emphasising that with sharecropping by “plantation”, the farm will be divided into two equal parts with the landowner and the tenant each managing their half independently. We argue that such arrangement for access to land for commercial agriculture tends to transfer land from communal ownership to private ownership for the tenant as long as the crop remains on the land. Therefore, for a crop like cashew with a very long lifespan, the tenant can hold the land acquired through sharecropping in near perpetuity. Thus, in the context of agriculture commercialisation with the increasing participation of external actors in large scale land transactions, traditional user rights through sharecropping are being transformed. The cultivation of tree crops like cashew with a life span of close to 100 years (Guinness World Record, 2021) effectively converts user rights to ownership rights. In rural communities like Nwoase in the Wenchi Municipality, socio-culturally embedded practices of sharecropping which guarantee all community members access to land for livelihood activities are transformed through commercial tree crop production with adverse implications for food security. Further, tree crops like cashew are generational crops inherited along lineage lines; hence, commercialisation is not only effectively reconfiguring the very fabrics of rural communal relations but can also result in long-term disputes over land ownership.

Sustainable Livelihood Framework

To critically deconstruct the transformation of land ownership and resultant conflicts due to the commercialisation of agriculture, this paper deploys the sustainable livelihood approach (SLA) as a conceptual lens. The SLA (Figure 1) offers a valuable analytical frame for unpacking factors that impact land as a critical asset for rural people and the resultant livelihood strategies and outcomes (Scoones, 2009; Cahn, 2002; Carney, 1998; Chambers & Conway, 1992). According to the DFID (1999:1), “a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living”, and that “a livelihood

is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.”

The SLA emphasises how livelihood assets (natural, physical, financial, social and human) are harnessed to make a living. The extent to which people can access livelihood assets, combine and convert them for livelihood activities are mediated by several factors (institutional structures and processes, individual background characteristics, livelihood strategy, and vulnerability contexts). In this study context, the land is a central livelihood resource that can be sequenced and combined to pursue different livelihood strategies, such as the shift towards cashew cultivation. Livelihood strategies through a skilful deployment of assets are vital to reducing the vulnerability of households and communities to shocks, trends, and seasonality (Scoones, 2009; Cahn, 2002; Carney, 1998); in this case, the negative effects of land commercialisation for cashew cultivation.

In the framework, access to the land and the subsequent livelihood strategies are influenced through the transformation of structures and institutions and processes (i.e., laws, policies, culture, power relations), which can improve or worsen livelihood outcomes (Scoones, 2009; Cahn, 2002; Carney, 1998; Chambers & Conway, 1992).

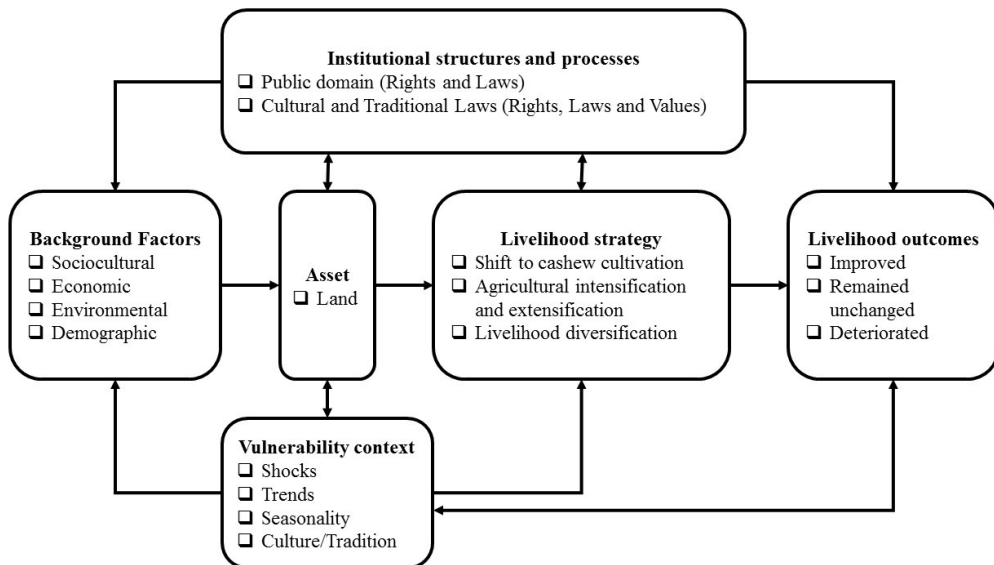


Figure 1: The Sustainable Livelihood Framework

Source: Adapted from DFID (1999)

In this study, the rate of land commercialisation is influenced by background characteristics

of households and institutional factors, which inform stakeholders' decisions to give out land in large quantities to enhance cashew cultivation. Before acquiring the available used or unused lands, certain processes and procedures will have to be documented to gain partial ownership and entitlement of the land. Institutional processes and structures oversee the effective transfer of land from one person to the other. In the study area, the Chief Priest, family heads and the other formal institutions represent major institutional forces. When land is commercialised, it has series of implications on the livelihoods of the entire community. For example, the driving force enhancing commercialisation of land for cashew production in the study area is tied to the land, which is a natural asset. Its extensification leads to social and economic development, such as improved income and social status (Scoones, 2009).

However, within the livelihood framework, when land is acquired and subjected to cashew cultivation, it reduces the amount of land for food crop farming (representing a shock), thereby creating food security challenges for poorer households in the community. Also, commercialisation of land for cashew cultivation may convert communal ownership of land to private ownership, which may create disputes within and between families. As has been noted by Paaga (2013), land disputes are a major hindrance to the use and tenure security and the well-being of rural dwellers whose livelihoods depend mainly on access to land. This situation may present deteriorated livelihood outcomes for farming households and community members. However, if traditional institutions can resolve these land disputes or forestall their occurrence effectively, access to land for cashew cultivation will lead to improved livelihood outcomes.

Methodology

Nwoase, a rural community in the Wenchi Municipality of the Bono Region (see Figure 2), was selected as the primary location due to its relatively recent involvement in cashew nut production. The community is the seat of a famous 'Kwaku Fri' shrine and provides a unique land tenure arrangement where the land is in the custody of the Chief Priest of the Shrine, Nana Drobo (IV). Farming is the main occupation of the residents, with special emphasis on the cultivation of cashew and food crops. The community has a total population of 1961, comprising 964 males and 997 females. It has 390 farming households and 263 houses, with an average household size of 5.2 and an inter-censal population growth rate of 3 percent (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). There are many small cashew buying outlets in the community. However, the Mim Cashew and Agricultural Production Limited and Olam Ghana predominantly buy the bulk of the cashew nuts produced in the study area.

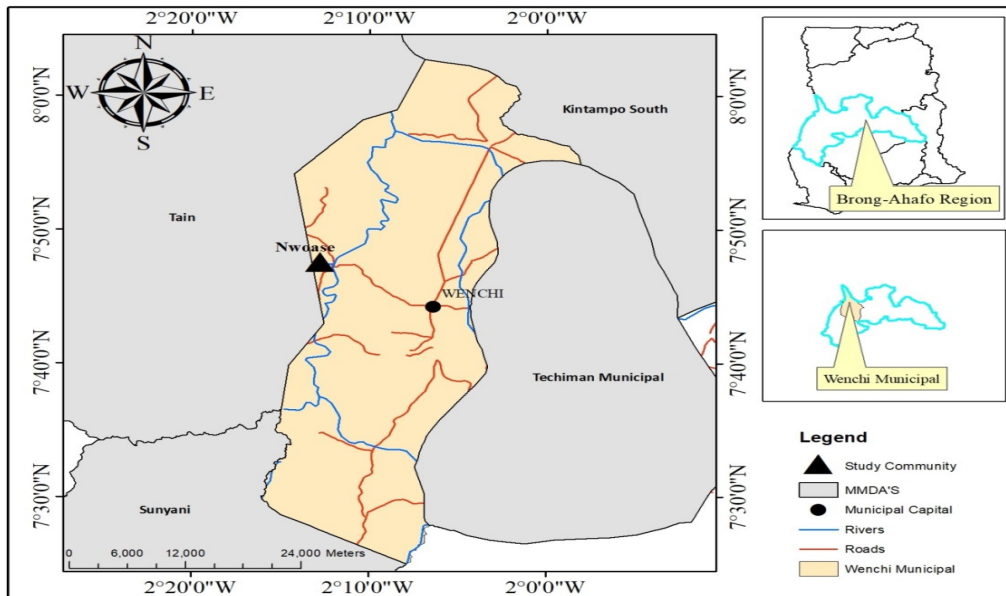


Figure 2: Map of Wenchi Municipality showing the Study Community

Source: Department of Geography and Regional Planning, UCC

The study was exploratory in design and adopted the mixed-method approach, which simultaneously triangulate quantitative and qualitative data collection methods (Creswell, 2003). As has been proven, a mixed-method approach enhances the degree of confidence in the findings compared with a single approach (Bryman, 1992). With the help of community leaders, a list of cashew farmers was generated. The Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table for sample size estimation was used to arrive at a sample of 197, approximated to 200. Then, the simple random sampling technique was employed to select the farmers of differing genders, ages, social statuses and with varying sizes of cashew plantations. In addition, 30 key informants, comprising nine interviewees and 21 participants of three focus groups, were selected to provide information to complement the quantitative data. These individuals and groups best interpreted the nature of land commercialisation, its effects on livelihood, and the implications for land disputes. The nine interviewees comprised the Chief, the Queen, family head, Assembly Member, Municipal Agricultural Officer, Director of the Office of the Administrator of Stool Lands, the Municipal Court Registrar and two community elders (a male and a female). Separate focus group discussions were also held for seven older males, seven older females and seven young adolescents.

Purposive sampling was used to select interviewees and participants of the focus group discussion for the study. According to Kumekpor (2002), this sampling technique is used

to select unique and informative samples. The justification for adopting this technique was that the participants were considered to have insights into land commercialisation and could contribute to the study. The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS (Version 21), with descriptive presentations in frequencies and percentages, whilst the qualitative data were transcribed and analysed thematically based on the study's objectives. For ethical reasons, pseudonyms were used to represent the respondents in the qualitative data. Ethical approval for the research was granted by the University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board in 2018, with ethical clearance-ID: UCCIRB/CHLS/2018/06.

Results and Discussion

In Ghana, cashew cultivation and associated businesses have flourished tremendously in recent years due to increased demand for raw nuts across the globe (Webber & Labaste, 2009). This situation has caused farmers and investors to acquire land in varied forms to meet such demands. The land may be legally or illegally acquired for commercial agricultural purposes. When land is acquired illegally, it raises the alarm on ownership contestations, leading to land disputes in varied forms. Similarly, generational and gendered disputes regarding access to land may also arise, especially when there is greater tension between and within families (Mariwah et al., 2019; Evans et al., 2014).

Land acquisition arrangements in the community

Kasanga and Kotey (2001) argued that land ownership and acquisition in Ghana have always been entangled in the muddled notions of private ownership vis-à-vis communal ownership, which has led to legal pluralism in land administration and management (Denchie et al. 2020) that cause lots of contradictions and conflicts. Governments of Ghana over the years have enacted laws and legislations on land in a bid to help navigate the competing and contrasting notions of land ownership and acquisitions (Aryeetey et al., 2007). In this study, the arrangement between land actors on the acquisition of land for cashew cultivation is executed around some communally agreed tenets, including purchase/lease, sharecropping, inheritance and gift (Table 1).

Table 1- Land acquisition arrangement in the study community

Acquisition arrangement	Sex				Total (N=200)
	Male		Female		
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Purchase	1	0.8	1	0.8	1.0
Inherited	9	7.1	9	12.2	9.0
Family land	13	10.3	9	12.2	11.0
Gift	1	0.8	0	0.0	0.5
Sharecropping	102	81.0	55	74.3	78.5
Total	126	100.0	74	100.0	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

As can be seen, sharecropping was the most dominant arrangement for acquiring land for cashew cultivation in the community. For example, most of the respondents (78.5 percent) acquired land for cashew cultivation through sharecropping, with a slight variation between males (81.0 percent) and females (74.3 percent). The reason for the sharecropping arrangement was that family land for farming was insufficient to satisfy the high desire for land for cashew cultivation. As a result, farmers acquire additional land from the Chief Priest and other family members through the sharecropping arrangement. In this study, family land accounted for only 11 percent, with 10.3 percent males and 12.2 percent females acquiring land through such a medium. The following excerpts from the interview confirm the prevalence of sharecropping arrangement in the community:

As already established, land in this community belongs to Nana Drobo (IV), and he has given portions to all families to farm on. If you are a migrant just like me, Nana will not sell the land to you. He loves migrants and preaches that we make new communities with visitors. If you want to use the land for cashew cultivation, you consult his council of elders through the "Abisahene" to proceed with the necessary arrangements. If the land is given to you, you prepare a document through the court to inform sharecropping (Tawiah, 40-year-old male participant, June 4, 2018).

I advised the teacher who stays next door. He was posted here to teach, but I was able to convince him to see the Chief Priest for some land. He was given 5 acres, and he has not fared poorly at all. He engages the service of labourers to take care of his cashew farm. At the end of the harvest season, he divides the proceeds into three and gives one to the landowner (Nimako, 47-year-old male participant, May 30, 2018).

As has been established by earlier studies, sharecropping is a dominant arrangement for acquiring land in most Ghanaian communities, especially for cash or tree crop cultivation (Baah & Kidido, 2020; Amanor, 2008; Nsiah-Gyabaah, 2000). In the study community, sharecropping was more prevalent for cashew cultivation, which, within the livelihood framework adapted for the study, represents an essential institutional process that creates access to land for the landless or non-indigenes within the community. The arrangement for sharecropping in the community starts with the prospective farmer approaching the landowner (Chief Priest) to inform him of their desire to access land for cashew cultivation. This negotiation is followed by paying “nsatuo” (thank you fees) depending on the number of acres needed. Findings from the narratives revealed that prospective farmers pay about GH¢ 1000 as the “thank you fees” for any plot of land acquired for cashew cultivation. This implies that farmers who need larger plots of land pay more to meet their demand. This arrangement confirms Amanor and Diterutuah’s (2001) assertion that there has been a transformation in the sharecropping system in Ghana whereby tenant farmers have to pay a reasonable fee before gaining access to land.

Upon maturity, the cashew cultivated on the acquired land is shared through the “*abunu*” system between the tenant and the landowner. The tenant can now consolidate their position as a landowner as long as their crop (cashew) remains on that land. Thus, this sharecropping arrangement introduces the principle of land commercialisation. The tenant can now transfer their portion of the crops (and hence the associated land) to their children and/or spouse, which guarantees generational transfer of land ownership. Though this land tenure arrangement may differ across various communities globally and is consistent with the fact that access to land depends on complex socio-cultural norms and practices that vary according to place and time (Joireman, 2008), it enables access to land for cashew cultivation and hence improved livelihood outcome.

Nature and types of land disputes emanating from cashew cultivation

The increasing cashew cultivation in the Wenchi Municipality and, for that matter, the study community may serve as a threat to livelihood outcomes, especially when land disputes are not properly resolved. Land disputes affect the social harmony of the community members. Findings from the study indicate that land commercialisation for cashew cultivation leads to land disputes of varying forms and degrees, including boundary and inheritance disputes. For example, the majority (86.5 percent) of the respondents believed that cashew cultivation to a large extent triggers land disputes, with virtually no variations in the responses of males and females (85.7 percent of males and 87.8 percent of females). On the seriousness of land disputes resulting from cashew cultivation in the community, 77 percent of males and 87.8 percent of females agreed that land disputes are very serious in the community. Carr (2008) argued that land remains a

key determinant in the social and economic status of people living in rural areas; hence, its commercialisation causes various agitations. Land disputes are not an exception. The following excerpts from the interviews revealed that land disputes are common in the community:

I can get you many of the documents that have come to our unit to assess for court action. Normally, the police will refer the case to our department when a land dispute arises from any crop (for now, cashew). We do an assessment, evaluate and see the cost of the damage that has been done to the crop. Afterwards, the findings are given to the police, who also report to court for the necessary action to be taken. There are many files to support the fact that land disputes are prevalent as a result of cashew cultivation (A 46-year-old male key informant, May 29, 2018).

Somewhere in early February, a man went to the farm where he saw a woman on his cashew farm picking his cashew nuts. On seeing the farmer approaching, the woman started running, leaving her baby on the farm. The angry farmer burnt the baby which became a very serious issue in this Municipality. Every Thursday, when we meet as Council, we settle many land ownership disputes, and I tell you it is not easy at all (A 34-year-old male key informant, June 2, 2018).

Land disputes in this community arise as a result of disobedience on our part. See, after the collapse of the Tobacco Company, their land is now being encroached by farmers for cashew cultivation. Will you be happy if you were the owner of the land? This illegal land usage has been a significant source of land disputes in this community for the past years. These individual farmers are in dispute with the Chief Priest who owns the land. Is it logical? (Evans, a 24-year-old male participant, June 1, 2018)

The community witnesses these land disputes as a result of cashew cultivation. From the quantitative data, Table 2 presents the various types of disputes prevalent in the study community. Evidence points to the fact that two major types of land disputes (boundary and inheritance disputes) emanate from the acquisition or use of land for cashew cultivation in the Nwoase community.

Table 2- *Types of land dispute*

Types of dispute	Frequency	Percentage
Boundary	106	39.4
Inheritance	97	36.1
Encroachment	47	17.5
Land use dispute	10	3.7
Ownership	9	3.3
Total	269*	100.0

* More than sample due to multiple responses

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Boundary and inheritance disputes accounted for more than half of the land disputes in the community, as reported by 39.4 percent and 36.1 percent respectively. This finding was corroborated by the following excerpts from the interviews and the focus group discussion:

I am facing land dispute on my farm with a neighbour because of this cashew business. Cashew is not like pawpaw; its branches extend across a specific land area. The branches of my cashew have extended into his farm, and we are still litigating on that. He says, it's his, but I know it's mine. Cashew cultivation should not have been a problem in this community, but we quarrel over unnecessary things because we don't follow farming procedures. He should have left 10 feet as a distance to mine, but because of greed and envy, those trees which are mine are untouchable. (Gator, 25-year-old male participant, June 2, 2018).

There are traces of land disputes from this cashew boom. As I have told you, every coin has two sides; since the emergence of this crop, if you share a boundary with another farmer and you are not vigilant, he will extend his farm into your land. This form of dispute is very common in this community. See, families still fight over farms left over by the deceased family member. Since the land is for the Chief Priest and has given it to the families to farm on, if you are not careful and you come farming here as a migrant on the family land, your children don't stand any chance of inheriting your farm. This issue is very alarming (Owusu, a 60-year-old male participant, May 30, 2018).

From the Municipality's perspective, it was revealed that most of the cases confirmed were on boundary, inheritance and encroachment. The assertion made by one participant supported this assertion:

For agriculture, most of the cases reported to us that have been documented are on boundary and encroachment. We don't have inheritance disputes because that is a family affair. Someone will deliberately shift someone's boundary or encroach someone's land and destroy the person's crop (Asante, a 46-year-old official from the Municipal Agricultural Office, June 3, 2018)

As the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data reveal, land disputes, particularly those related to boundary and inheritance resulting from the commercialisation of cashew cultivation, have become a matter of grave concern to the residents and community leaders. This finding resonates with earlier studies by Otsuka and Place (2014) and Kasanga and Kotey (2001) that land commercialisation creates a shortage of land, thereby causing intense disputes among families and between neighbours.

Observation during data collection indicated that the disputes are triggered by the benefits that would accrue to the prospective land actors. Since the cashew business is a lucrative venture, farmers (indigenes and migrants) and the landowners attach high economic value to their land because they have property rights over its usage. At the community level, the problems of individual household heads and their households translate into their extended families because of the mechanical solidarity in the study community. At the household level, 49.2 percent of males and 45.9 females claimed they had been involved in land disputes due to the cashew cultivation in the community. In addition, at the extended family level, about nine out of ten (91.3 percent males and 87.8 percent females) respondents indicated that they know of an extended family member who had been involved in land disputes related to cashew cultivation in the community.

These disputes sometimes lead to the destruction of crops or costly litigations that may erode the gains from the cashew cultivation, thereby leading to deteriorated livelihood outcomes for both parties, as revealed in the sustainable livelihood framework (Figure 1).

Perceptions on the trend of land disputes from cashew cultivation

Comparing recent land disputes to ten years ago, 73 percent of the respondents (71.4 percent males and 75.7 percent females) claimed that the situation had increased greatly while 16 percent (comprising 14.3 percent males and 18.9 percent females) agreed that the issue has only increased marginally (Table 3). Meanwhile, this incidence of land disputes occurring in the study community due to cashew cultivation may represent a shock that is likely to worsen their livelihood outcomes in the future (Scoones, 2009; DFID, 1999). Similarly, a substantial proportion of the respondents (41 percent), made up of 41.3 percent males and 40.5 percent females, indicated that land disputes from cashew cultivation will also increase greatly in the next ten years. This finding is again

consistent with studies of Yaro, Teye and Torvikey (2018), Otsuka and Place (2014) and Kasanga and Kotey (2001) that land commercialisation creates a shortage of land, thereby causing intense disputes among families and between neighbours.

Table 3- Perceptions on the trend of land disputes from cashew cultivation

Projections	Level of agreement (%) (n=200)			
	Ten years ago		Next ten years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Increased greatly	71.4	75.7	41.3	40.5
Increased marginally	14.3	18.9	14.3	14.9
Remained the same	0.8	1.4	2.4	4.1
Decreased marginally	7.9	1.4	5.5	10.8
Decreased greatly	5.6	2.6	36.5	29.7
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

However, 34 percent, comprising 36.6 percent males and 29.7 percent females, believed that the incidence would decrease in the near future. The projected decrease in the extent of the land dispute was corroborated by participants of the FGD as revealed as follows:

Land dispute cannot progress into the future. The land is for Nana Kofi Drobo (IV), and to say, we are birds eating on someone's parcel of land. How can we keep fighting to disturb the landowner? He will answer by killing us or we shall run away as birds in shame if he comes sacking us. The landowner is a peaceful man who has given us usage rights and not fighting right. I believe that in the next ten years, issues of land disputes will be too small a thing to discuss. We can and will change with time, but I don't see any increase in land disputes in the next ten years (Mark, a 22-year-old male participant, May 30, 2018).

Land dispute resolution mechanisms in the community

Since some respondents believe that land disputes cannot continue forever, the study sought to explore land dispute resolution mechanisms in the community. Respondents and participants revealed that settling land disputes emanating from cashew cultivation in the study area followed certain laid down procedures and channels. Resourceful community members and government agencies are always involved in addressing the challenges facing farmers. The qualitative data showed that most of the land disputes were reported to the Chief and his council of elders within the community. When this fails, 96.5 percent of the respondents (94.4 percent males and 100 percent

females) resorted to the Municipal court to adjudicate land related cases. Participants recounted their experiences as illustrated in the following excerpts:

For boundary disputes, the case is sent to Nana, who is the head of the community. If the case is too intolerable by the parties involved, he chooses to seize the land because he owns it. After settling the case between the parties involved, he instructs the Okyeame to take the two parties to the land and proper demarcation is done on a peaceful note (Hagai, a 38-year-old female participant, June 1, 2018).

Disputes among individuals are settled by the family heads or the chief and his council of elders. But the ones between individuals and the Chief Priest are sent to the Wenchi court. It is believed that the Chief and his council of elders will certainly support the Chief Priest, hence giving a biased verdict. There are so many old and new land ownership cases still in court. Hmm, it is serious (a 24-year-old male participant, Fynn, June 1, 2018).

The above excerpts reflect the role of the traditional authorities as the first point in the management of land disputes at the community level, particularly in rural areas (Berry, 2009). Boege (2006) and Owusu-Yeboah (2005) have observed that customary land resolution is more participatory, process-oriented, and focuses more on conciliation to avoid any loss of face, thereby guaranteeing sustainable results. However, the findings reveal that traditional leaders are not always successful at managing disputes, especially when they (the leaders) are a party to the disputes. This supports the assertion of Odametey (2007) that, in customary systems, equal rights are not guaranteed in disputes, especially when the case involves elders of the community or men against women, young people and strangers.

Conclusion

This exploratory study with household heads who are cashew farmers, young adolescents, older males and females, and community and Municipal opinion leaders in the study area and Wenchi Municipality in the Bono region of Ghana has revealed several tensions and challenges for policy and practice. Thus, the expansion of cashew cultivation in rural communities has immense implications for land disputes. As this study has revealed, cashew cultivation has led to increased land disputes in the community and the Municipality, leading to deteriorated livelihood outcomes. Again, it was evident at the household and extended family levels that boundary and inheritance disputes were the two most common forms of land disputes prevalent in the community. Also, most respondents believe that land disputes in the community have increased significantly in the past decade. There is a mixed finding on whether the phenomenon will increase in the coming decade. Meanwhile, the Chief and his Council of elders are trying to settle

land disputes in the community, except for a few cases where land disputes are settled at the Municipal Court.

We conclude that land disputes in the study community may affect the extent of rural agricultural investment and socio-economic development by destroying the rural moral economy and sustainability of livelihoods due to loss of lives and property and untitled land rights. Therefore, the following recommendations are made to inform land management practices in the community, and by extension, the Wenchi Municipality. First, the Chief Priest and family heads of respective clans should regulate customary land ownership and its usage at the community level. Second, to minimise boundary disputes, the Chief Priest, through the linguist and other community leaders, should educate the farmers to properly mark the boundary marks of the acquired land before its use. Third, to minimise inheritance disputes in the community, the Chief Priest, the Chief and his council of elders and family heads should restructure land inheritance practices to enhance the peaceful transfer of land as property to the children and the extended families of the deceased. Fourth, it is also advocated that the Lands Commission, through the Office of Administrator of Stool Lands, should be empowered by some legislative instrument to supervise land transactions at the community level. This arrangement will help forestall the numerous disputes surrounding land acquisition within rural communities in Ghana.

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