

An examination of the role of the state in the promotion of agro-investments: the case of the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT)

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Agriculture has gained the attention of world governments, international financial institutions, and agribusiness as a powerful driver of economic growth and environmental conservation. The Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) was born out of this renewed interest in agriculture as a risk-sharing model of public-private partnership to rapidly increase the region's agricultural potential. This is a new model in Tanzania's agriculture and specific studies on the role of the state in the promotion of agro-investments to establish whether the SAGCOT initiative privileges corporations over smallholders are limited. This study was, therefore, conducted to fill this gap. The study adopts the Marxist Political Economy (MPE) approach to examine the role of the state in the promotion of large-scale agroinvestments in Tanzania.

Research findings revealed that the agricultural model promoted in SAGCOT represents the interests of multinational seed, fertilizer and chemical companies. The rhetoric of inclusion of small-scale producers as out-growers or partners is merely a way to legitimize SAGCOT as an 'inclusive win-win' development initiative that benefits everyone. I conclude that by supporting the SAGCOT initiative, the state facilitates the interests of multinational agribusiness and automatically undermines the interests of small-scale producers who are the majority stakeholders in the agricultural sector. The state that takes agriculture as a national project by formulating and implementing policies that seek to achieve food sovereignty and control land, water, seeds and other inputs in favour of the peasantry.