

## Review Article

# Ivorian Elites, Rubber Farming and the Land Question in the Post-Conflict Context of Côte d'Ivoire

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**Abstract:** Land acquisitions are not limited to foreign-owned operations. Recent studies mention the role sometimes played by national elites in major land acquisitions. This issue is of particular importance in Côte d'Ivoire, where the Ivorian elites have become very interested in land in recent years. The involvement of these national elites in plantation agriculture is not new. In the past, access to land by elites for the creation of coffee, cocoa or palm plantations was achieved through the granting of rural land to barons of the regime during the declassification of forests, or through customary procedures in the villages of origin, for those originating from the forest zone. Since the 2000s, the dynamics of land acquisition by the Ivorian elites has taken another form, with widespread recourse to the land market. This dynamic will become more pronounced three years after the military-political crisis. The study is essentially qualitative. The analysis is based on data collected in 2017 from 40 buyers and 31 sellers. This text sheds light on the logics of access to land for the creation of rubber plantations, the pragmatic strategies of land appropriation by elites and the land and social issues induced by these land transfers in the post-conflict period.

**Keywords:** Rubber plantation, land market, national elites, rural land, land conflicts, post-conflict.

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## INTRODUCTION

The land issue in the South and in transition countries has been addressed in recent years with a focus on 'large-scale acquisitions' of agricultural land by international operators. Land acquisitions are not limited to foreign-owned operations. Recent studies mention the role sometimes played by national elites in large land acquisitions. This issue is of particular importance in Côte d'Ivoire, with the marked infatuation of political and economic elites with land in recent years. The involvement of these elites in plantation agriculture is not new. In the past, their access to land for the creation of coffee, cocoa or palm plantations was achieved through the granting of rural land to barons of the regime during the declassification of forests, or through customary procedures in the villages of origin, for those originating from the forest zone. Since the 2000s, the dynamics of land acquisition by the Ivorian elites has taken another form, with widespread recourse to the land market. This dynamic will be accentuated three years after the military-political crisis by the rush of these elites to regions where land is still available,

with the objective of accessing land to create a rubber plantation.

The issue of land transactions is widely highlighted in many research studies conducted in Côte d'Ivoire (Colin and Ayouz, 2006; Colin, 2008; Ruf, 2008a; Ruf, 2008b, Tarrouth and Colin, 2016; Colin and Tarrouth, 2017). This research addresses the issue of land acquisitions by managers or elites in a detailed manner in the description of the practices and games of actors at work, but without really making a specific analysis of the involvement of economic and political elites.

The acquisition of rural land by national elites therefore remains an issue that has yet to be explored in the Ivorian context. It is this observation that has led us to focus on this issue, specifically on political and economic elites.

The aim is to provide answers to the following questions: who are these actors and what are the logics

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of access to land that underlie the creation of rubber plantations? What are the pragmatic strategies for appropriating and securing land for the elites? What are the land and social issues involved in these acquisitions for the populations concerned?

This paper aims to analyse the motivations, acquisition strategies and land tenure security of elites, as well as the land and social issues at stake in these transactions. The first section of the text provides a brief overview of land acquisitions by national elites in Côte d'Ivoire. The second section presents the conditions for the production of the research data. The three sections that follow present respectively the motivations of the actors, the strategies of appropriation and securing of land by the elites, and the land and social stakes.

### 1. Data production conditions

The study is essentially qualitative, based on data collected in 2013-2014 with an update in the field in 2017 and the exploration of other sites in this locality.

Data collection was carried out from two perspectives. On the one hand, surveys were carried out in the Toumodi region in the centre, which is known to be attractive to the elite. The acquisitions were observed in the forest-savannah contact zone, mainly in the villages of Adaou, Kalekoa, Dida-Kouadiokro, Akakro-N'gban, Kpacobo and Dida-blé. These villages were identified during interviews with Ministry of Agriculture agents in charge of plot surveys (see below). At the village level, we proceeded by 'snowball' sampling. In addition to the surveys conducted with sellers and buyers, interviews were conducted at each site with the sub-prefect, the departmental director of agriculture, village authorities, youth associations and 'rural canvassers' (a local term for some of the intermediaries in transactions). On the other hand, surveys were conducted with buyers living in Abidjan who had only acquired more than 50 hectares. We identified these buyers by initially using our social networks, then by extending the population to be surveyed in a snowball fashion.

We surveyed 32 buyers in Abidjan, 8 buyers and 31 sellers in Toumodi. The surveys thus covered a total of 40 buyers and 31 individual sellers. The data on transferors and acquirers were obtained from direct surveys of the parties concerned, but some information was also collected indirectly, by being provided by the party to the transaction being surveyed and relating to the non-surveyed party. This research is part of a larger comparative project (ANR-17-CE41-0001) subsequently funded by the Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (Paris) and the French Agency for Scientific Research (ANR).

### 2. Land acquisitions by elites in Côte d'Ivoire: a brief overview

The issue of rural land acquisitions remains relatively well documented in the literature on land issues in Côte d'Ivoire.

The phenomenon of executives and politicians investing in land is not completely new. Various cadres of the Houphouët-Boigny regime were able to create large oil palm, pineapple or banana 'poyo' plantations, and for some, some first rubber plantations in the 1970s and 1980s.

The involvement of the cadres or elites was also mentioned in the agrarian history of Côte d'Ivoire, which in the 1970s was the subject of a specific debate about the penetration of capitalism in agriculture, compared to the Kenyan debate. At that time, there was talk of agrarian capitalism (Stavenhagen, 1974), of a 'bourgeoisie of planters' (Gastellu and Yapi, 1982). One of the ideas that emerged from these various debates is that the 'large village planters' and absentee farmers (managers and civil servants) (Yapi, 1987) face difficulties in the extended reproduction of their agricultural investment, which limits the accumulation process.

Affou Yapi describes the absentee farmer as an economic agent in a particular situation of part-time agriculture : active outside agriculture and inactive in it. In other words, there is no investment of the labour force and/or skills of the economic agent in question in the various activities. This investment is intended for the main activity, while agriculture only benefits from a monetary contribution. These absentee planters are : "senior administrative officials (2), senior politicians (6), professionals (2), primary school teachers (18), various technicians (7), employees (8), traders (8)" (Affou Yapi 1987 : 22). The reasons for choosing this activity are political, economic, subjective and opportunity-based. For the exploitation of their plots, they had recourse to salaried labour. Chauveau (2000) refers to the role of managers and politicians who invest in the land issue, in particular 'certain barons of the regime who capitalise on large areas of land in the South West'.

Other recent studies also mention the presence of this type of actor in agriculture in correlation with the rubber boom (Colin, 2008a, 2011; Ruf, 2008a, 2011; Colin and Ruf, 2011; Mlan, 2013; Tarrouth and Colin 2016; Colin and Tarrouth, 2017).

For Ruf (2008, 2011), the phenomenon gained momentum under the Gbagbo regime from 2002 onwards, with an acceleration in 2005. These actors, described by the author as 'executive planters', are more motivated by a 'rubber' strategy, reflecting a race towards a new rent, than by land strategies. Most of these executives live in Abidjan, or even abroad, and

have important positions in the administration, or even at the top of the state, or in the professions and services, sometimes in the agro-industry. They are different from "village planters", who, with some exceptions, live permanently in the village and whose income is essentially agricultural. They buy land in lots of tens or hundreds of hectares or take out a P&P contract (Colin and Ruf, 2009). Ruf reported 'the presence of lawyers, judges, prefects, army officers, accountants, directors of ministries and executives of rubber companies or professional structures linked to the world of rubber and cocoa, and even mobile phone companies, all of whom are taking advantage of this renewed opportunity in rubber. The parcels transferred are fallow land, forests and old plantations. The majority of cedants are natives (67) and non-natives (10 Burkinabés)' (Ruf, 2008). The main reasons for transferring land identified in this study are: 'the financing of medical care, funerals and school, and conflictual plots: to overcome a conflict over a plot with a brother, uncle or aunt, the individual prefers to sell it to a person whose status will muzzle the rivals (e.g. a military officer, a judge). Intra-family conflicts are very often generated by these transactions' (Ruf, op.cit).

In a study carried out on a national scale, Colin (2008a, 2011) notes that Ivorian executives appear to be the new players in the purchase-sale game, with observations made from Toumodi (where the areas transferred can exceed 100 ha, due in particular to the transfer of savannah land) to Guiglo, Soubré, Aboisso (where transfers rarely exceed 10 ha), Daloa, Oumé and Tabou. On all these sites, the dynamic is said to be very recent (since 2005) and is linked to the boom in rubber cultivation. "These buyers are doctors or pharmacists, officers in the army, the police or the Water and Forests Service, executives, company directors, businessmen, traders, university professors, ambassadors, magistrates, employees, agents (not executives) of public administrations, nurses, teachers, etc., or even residents in Europe, although no information is available on their activities' (Colin, 2008: 26).

The presence of managers is also highlighted by Colin and Ruf (2011), as the actors behind the rise of a new type of institutional arrangement in the forest zone, the planter-sharer described above.

### **3- Characterisation of the actors and logics of access to land for the creation of rubber plantations**

#### **3.1 Characterisation of elites and cedants**

Acquirers are senior officers in the army, gendarmerie, navy, water and forestry, ministers, public administration executives, private sector executives, politicians, businessmen, lawyers, economic operators, presidents of institutions and ambassadors.

The sellers are indigenous people. They are heads of families, chiefs of land, young people (social cadets), village chiefs, women (all heads of family).

#### **3.2. Logics of access to land by elites**

The logic of the actors must be understood as the basis of the choices made by the actors involved. It is a question of identifying the motivations underlying land acquisition and the creation of rubber plantations by the elites.

##### **3.2.1. The search for diversification of the elites' sources of income or complementary income**

The enthusiasm of elites for the creation of rubber plantations was initially a cyclical phenomenon. For a long time, investment in agriculture was not considered particularly attractive by the Ivorian elites, compared to investment in urban land, import-export trade and services.

Today, these urban actors are acquiring land and investing in agriculture. The main purpose of land acquisition is to enable the establishment of a rubber plantation, which is of major interest from an economic point of view.

This investment was seen in the surveys as providing a secure and attractive additional income [1].

"You know, the land does not betray, there is a secure and guaranteed income with rubber farming. All the manufacturing products come from rubber farming. It also gives money every month until more than 45 years, which is the life span of a rubber plantation.

"I am certainly the director of a company and given the hazards of life and the fact that I am in the private sector, I decided to secure my income and stabilise my standard of living until I die. Until today, rubber farming is a promising investment. Also, there is a saying that the land never betrays its man '".

##### **3.2.2. Preparation for retirement**

Preparation for retirement is another incentive for the creation of rubber plantations and the acquisition of land by national elites. The concern to maintain their standard of living after retirement encourages some elites, regardless of their wealth, to become agricultural entrepreneurs. This investment provides an income for retirement. The economic interest of creating the plantation is considered here in the long term. This argument, mentioned by the majority of respondents, is

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<sup>1</sup> According to the SPLCI (Société de Plantation de Côte d'Ivoire), the expected monthly production of 1400Kg of wet rubber per hectare meant that in 2012, for 5 hectares, a monthly gain of 770,000 CFA francs could be expected (price of 550 FCFA/kg). This favourable assessment, widely shared by the respondents, could be revised in view of the recent drop in the price of rubber (391 FCFA/kg in January 2014, 272 FCFA in August 2015 according to the association of natural rubber professionals of Côte d'Ivoire, APROMAC).

related to the inadequacy of retirement pensions (especially as retirement may mean the disappearance of "informal" sources of additional income for some). "I bought land to grow rubber trees] to prepare for my retirement because I am in the private sector, and when I retire, someone in the private sector earns less than a public servant. Rubber farming feeds people for more than 40 years, you gain a lot in terms of income"; "it's a passport to retirement"; "it's to guarantee me a good, peaceful retirement, because with rubber it's possible and safe".

### 3.2.3. The constitution of a family land heritage

The involvement of elites in rubber cultivation in Côte d'Ivoire often poorly conceals the desire of certain buyers to build up reserves or land holdings for their descendants. Finally, investment in rubber cultivation aims to ensure the future of their children, in a patrimonial logic. Thus, during an interview with elites about their interest in agriculture, my interlocutors declared: "I invested in rubber because it is a safe and certain investment and it is an inheritance for my children"; "I grow rubber to be able to leave an inheritance to my children; rubber pays and it lasts for up to 40 years and it is an inheritance for my children and grandsons"; "I chose rubber because it is the crop of the future today and I will be able to leave an inheritance to my children".

In most regions of Côte d'Ivoire, land is now considered the best inheritance to leave to one's offspring. This trend seems to concern all elites involved in agriculture.

### 3.2.3. Money laundering

The farms and especially the rubber plantations set up by the elites constitute a form of money laundering. Funds of dubious origin are invested massively in the creation of a plantation. Later, the income from the crops is used to fund the elite's bank accounts in a completely legal manner.

## 4. The pragmatic strategies of land appropriation and security of the Ivorian elites

Urban elites develop various strategies to acquire land and create rubber plantations. The following analysis presents the most frequent cases encountered in the field.

### 4.1. Pragmatic strategies of land appropriation by elites

The acquisitions made by the buyers surveyed in Abidjan are located in Divo, Anyama, Sikensi, Fresco, Agboville, Grand-Lahou, Toumodi, Daoukro, Ayamé, Zoukougbeu, Dabou, Aboisso, Gagnoa, Soubre, Guiglo, Meagui, Tabou, Abengourou, N'Douci, Bongouanou and Daloa. The choice of these localities is explained by the fact that they are close or relatively close to Abidjan (the usual place of residence of the cadres), easily and quickly accessible, and are

considered areas where there is still forest or fallow land available. In these areas, purchase and planter-share contracts are the acquisition strategies most used by these elites.

#### 4.1.1. Land acquisition through purchase: security of tenure sought through certification

Recourse to purchase can result from the inequitable distribution of land among members of the same family. It is common for the elite, who are absent from the village, to be harmed when the land is shared and for the family patrimony to be occupied entirely by their brothers who have remained in the village. This was the situation experienced by a politician interviewed in Abidjan, who found that his elders had monopolised plots of land that were rightfully his by inheritance. He was forced to buy more than 72 ha of land in the neighbouring village to grow rubber trees. What explains the choice of these types of contract?

The choice of contract type is therefore linked to the local context, to the perception of the different contracts by the actors, and to the conditions under which the actors meet (power relations in the negotiation).

The results of our surveys show that the choice of contract is correlated with a certain number of advantages and disadvantages that are apparent to our respondents. Purchasers prefer to buy because they want to become owners, to work freely without being worried, and to be secure in the establishment of the land certificate: 'with the purchase, I am at ease because I do not have to answer to anyone once I have the land certificate'; 'I can have the land certificate and become an owner, unlike other contracts where I think the owner gets his land back'; 'the purchase allows you to be an owner for life. You have all the rights to the land. You can do what you want with the plot and on the plot'; 'being an owner means you are protected from disputes. With your certificate, your investment is secure in court'; 'I prefer buying because for me it is more secure. Once you have the certificate, it is legal proof.

#### 4.1.2. Land acquisition through the planter-share contract: a win-win contract for the purchaser and the landowner

Planter-share can be defined in generic terms as an arrangement whereby a farmer gains access to a long-term right of use, or even ownership of the land, by developing land through the creation of a perennial plantation (cocoa, oil palm, rubber) and transferring part of the created plantation, or its production, to the landowner. Three types of P&P contracts can be distinguished in Côte d'Ivoire, depending on the purpose of the sharing (Colin and Ruf, 2011): (i) a contract covering the plantation only: when production begins, the plantation is shared between the farmer and the transferor, who retains ownership of the entire land;

(ii) a contract covering the plantation and the land; (iii) a contract for the crop only, without sharing the plantation (and possibly the land); the person who makes the plantation then farms it, keeping part of the crop.

With regard to the planter-sharer contract, the respondents think that it is less conflictual than the purchase. They say that this contract does not leave the transferor or his family behind, and that it avoids the bitterness and possible disputes of the transferor or his family members. For them, it is a win-win contract.

"I think that with this contract everyone wins and tomorrow his family will not complain because they also win"; "To avoid problems in the future on this plot; this way the contract involves both parties and everyone wins his share, the family of the transferor will not be bitter"; "Also, both parties win; the transferor as well as the lessee and this avoids disputes because the transferor and his family also win".

For a sub-prefect, a win-win contract would be the best way to avoid conflicts and land concentration. These arguments explain this position: 'People sell because the peasant population does not have the means to develop these plots and there is no credit to enable them to do so. Poverty means that people have no choice when they have a problem, the alternative is to sell without thinking. The planter-share contract would be a contractual model to promote because it allows the farmer to keep pace with the rubber boom. It is also a win-win contract. We would avoid a challenge from any member of the transferor's family and a concentration, a land grab in the hands of the richest, as we are currently seeing.

## **5.2 Drawing up a private deed: proof of transfer in the event of conflict**

This practice is a frequent means of securing a transaction. All the actors surveyed stated that the transactions carried out were "paper". The handwritten or computerised contracts are drawn up by a young person from the village who is often an intermediary in the transaction, by the transferor or the purchaser, by the village chief's secretary, or by an agent of the Ministry of Agriculture in a private capacity (for a sum of between 10,000 and 20,000 FCFA). These contracts are labelled under various names: cession contract (for the transfer of a long-term right of use), attestation or partnership agreement (for planter-sharers), attestation of sale, sale agreement, sale contract. These contracts generally mention the identity of the parties, the names of the witnesses, the location of the plot, the surface area, the total amount paid in the case of purchase-sale, the amount to be paid later (if there are several payments). The signatures are sometimes legalised at the town hall or the sub-prefecture or endorsed by the village chiefdom. This does not give the document any legal value, but it reinforces its credibility in the eyes of

the actors (cost varying from 500 to 5,000 FCFA). These 'papers' constitute proof of transfer, which can be used by the sub-prefect or the customary authorities in the event of a conflict.

## **5.5 Security through social entrenchment: a guarantee of social cohesion and prevention in the presence or absence of a land certificate**

Securitisation through social entrenchment is a practice that can be seen in the increase in non-contractual considerations. Some buyers are aware of the fact that they are often exposed to the risk of having an arrangement called into question, and the buyers themselves may play the game of increasing non-contractual compensations, various material and financial services rendered to the person who has given them the plot they are using. This practice of securitisation is confirmed by the purchasers on the sites surveyed. The comments made by some of the buyers surveyed speak for themselves.

"When you give gifts from time to time to the person who gave you the plot, it strengthens the relationship and creates trust between you. By making these gestures, it is also a way of being secure on the land you are working (Tax inspector).

This practice of securitisation therefore allows the elites to have the support of the transferor or certain members of his family in the event of a dispute with a third party (whether or not a member of the transferor's family). The increase in compensation after the transaction can also be a way for the buyer to secure his investment in the absence of a land certificate.

## **6-The land and social issues raised by these land transfers**

Land is an issue that brings together many actors with often divergent interests. In the context of elite rubber plantation investments, various intra-family, inter-family and inter-village conflicts emerge and, in some cases, become intertwined. In addition to these family and village conflicts, other issues of elite rubber plantations related to the impact on the distribution of land resources emerge.

### **6.1. Land tenure tensions and conflicts**

In general, conflicts arise from many factors that cannot be listed here. Generally speaking, however, these conflicts reflect a divergence in the interpretation of actors with regard to the common norms and principles of land management at the family or village level. Some actors opt for a productivist logic while others support a rentier logic. When a land-seeking elite comes up against a family or village in the latter situation, conflict soon emerges. Sometimes the elites are often victims of their lack of concern for the needs of the ceding families in the village community. Conflicts can also be the expression of insubordination of certain members to the family ideology on land. This

attitude is typical of the younger generations who question the content of the rights imposed on them by their elders. This is why the large-scale land acquisitions of certain elites are often perceived by the youth or the village community as land grabbing.

In Kpouèbo we have identified three main levels of land conflicts related to elite rubber plantations: inter-village conflicts, intra-family conflicts and conflicts between elites and landowners

Inter-village conflicts are frequent when the disputed plot of land is located on the border of two villages. These are complex conflicts involving both families and lineages in the two bordering villages. These are conflicts that arise over the boundaries of village lands. Nowadays, neighbouring villages claim the limits of their land on both sides, either to enlarge their farms or to conquer some portions of fertile land that had not been exploited before. These conflicts are becoming more and more frequent in Côte d'Ivoire. This is due to the lack of knowledge of the boundaries by the complainants and the absence of historical documents that allow the boundaries of the land of each village to be easily identified. In the sub-prefecture of Kpouèbo, our investigations reveal that these conflicts, which used to be less frequent, have now become more pronounced with the rush of elites into certain villages in search of plots to buy. Faced with the power of money and the arrival of new solvent actors in a local context of economic crisis, some village chiefs are claiming unused land belonging to their neighbours, which they have allegedly settled for ages. These tendentious claims, based on the right of ownership of the first to arrive, will lead to numerous conflicts between villages. There are seven (7) cases of conflict: Adaou vs Kalekoa, Akakro N'Gban vs Kpouébo, Kpouébo vs Assakra, Dida-Blé vs Dida-Yaokro, Assakra vs Akakro N'Gban, Adaou vs Akakro N'Gban ; Kalékoa vs Kpacobo. The last case cited concerned a 700 ha plot of land sold to a colonel by the customary chiefs of the village of Kpacobo, and ended in a confrontation with hunting rifles between the two villages following the claims of the people of Kalekoa. It took the intervention of the army and the gendarmerie to contain the two belligerents.

Intra-family conflicts are most often between members of the same family. These conflicts generally arise when one of the relatives (brother, older or younger brother, cousin, nephew, aunt, uncle) of the transferor, who usually lives in the city, contests the transfer. Most of the time, these transactions are concluded in their absence. Here, the presence of the elites is still perceptible.

Conflicts between elites and rural populations occur when the elite does not respect the contractual clauses or its commitments to the transferor or the populations. For example, in Dida-Kouadiokro, a 10-

hectare plantation should have been planted for the head of the family who had sold 187 hectares to a director of the Compagnie Ivoirienne d'Electricité (CIE), but this plantation was carried out, but was then no longer maintained - the expectation of the transferor being that this maintenance would be the responsibility of the buyer. In Kalekoa, the village is still waiting for electrification and the construction of a water tower, although these investments should have been made before the buyer committed to planting (the 67 ha have been fully planted to date).

As for the question concerning the impact of transfers on land distribution, the analysis of our empirical data shows that these acquisitions can lead in the long run to (i) a concentration of land in the hands of elites, (ii) a disappearance of land suitable for food crops, (iii) an exclusion of women and social cadets.

## 6.2 Land concentration

This, as we have mentioned, occurs when most land is concentrated in the hands of a small group of individuals. On the question of land concentration, we calculated the percentage ratio at the level of each sub-prefecture. These ratios reveal that managers hold 4.5% of rural land in Toumodi. These results indicate at least a possible concentration of rural land in the hands of managers in the various localities concerned. At the village level, we observed in the field, particularly in the villages of Adou and Kalekoua in the sub-prefecture of Kpouèbo, that some of the ceding families plead with certain managers to whom they had ceded their land to obtain a portion of land to cultivate food crops. Apart from these factors, there is also a strong presence of these purchasers with areas varying from 50 to more than 1000 hectares. The most important ones counted among the respondents are impressive: a businessman (more than 3 kilometres), a former director of the autonomous port (1,200 ha), a former director of the Compagnie Ivoirienne d'Electricité (1,075 ha), a former Prime Minister (700 ha), an official of the Ivorian football federation (700 ha), a former dignitary of the constitutional court (400 ha), and a colonel (700 ha).

## 6.3. The disappearance of land suitable for food crops.

In the department of Toumodi, the sub-prefecture of Kpouèbo has been an area of high food crop production, particularly rice and plantain, for many years. The situation is different today with the creation of elite plantations. The available plots of land where these crops are grown are almost planted with rubber trees, as in towns such as Grand-Lahou, Aboisso and Bonoua, where the entire vegetation cover is dominated by rubber tree plantations. To deal with this section, we mobilised observations and interviews with the authorities at each site (sub-prefects, village chiefs, youth presidents, departmental directors of agriculture). These interviews revealed a certain number of significant factors, revealing and testifying to a

potential disappearance of cultivable areas for food crops in the localities surveyed. These factors include (i) the decline in rainfed rice production from 150 tonnes in 2011 to 17 tonnes in 2017, (ii) the increase in the price of plantains from 7 bananas at 100 CFA francs on the Kpouébo market in 2011 to 3 bananas at 100 CFA francs in 2017, (iii) a ban on land sales by the Sub-Prefect through the signing of a circular to curb sales in the sub-prefecture, (iv) sensitisation of the local population to anarchic sales. These actions undertaken by the local authorities demonstrate the seriousness of the phenomenon in this locality.

#### 6.4. Exclusion of women and social cadets

Exclusion occurs when the majority of land in a given locality is held by a small number of individuals. This situation can have consequences at the family level. Indeed, when faced with money and solvent actors such as the elites, heads of families do not hesitate to sell off land to the detriment of the rightful owners. It even happens that the rightful owners see their rights called into question. Seen from this angle, these transfers lead to the considerable shrinkage, or even total disappearance, of the family's land heritage. These cases of transfer by the heads of families, identified on our sites, are impressive:

Case 1. K.K.J, a young head of family aged 38 years residing in Kalekoa, transfers three plots of land (49 ha, 40 ha, 30 ha) to three large executives. After the transfer, he finds himself with an area of 9 ha out of 128 ha, almost the totality of the family's land assets sold.

Case 2. Y.N, a 61-year-old head of family living in Dida-Kouadiokro, sold two plots of land (40 ha, 20 ha) to a senior public official and a senior politician respectively. He has only one plot of 2 ha left.

Case 3. G.Y., an 82-year-old head of household living in Adaou, transfers 62 ha to an accountant. His land holdings are reduced to zero.

The survey data also show that the area of land transferred among the respondents is three times greater than the remaining area (2233.2 ha transferred against 681.25 ha). These results also reflect a reduction in the land holdings of the sellers. These transfers can be interpreted as a kind of limited rationality on the part of the transferors, characterised by what psycho-economists call a preference for the present. In fact, the latter, knowing that they have insufficient land assets, sell the family land without worrying about future generations. The satisfaction of immediate needs takes precedence over any other project.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The creation of rubber plantations is perceived as a means of diversifying income resources or supplementing income, a way of maintaining a standard of living after retirement, a way of building up assets for heirs, and in some cases a way of laundering funds of dubious origin for the elites in Côte d'Ivoire. The land, which is a precious capital, indispensable for the

creation of rubber plantations, is obtained mainly through purchase and planter-share contracts. The former allows them to become owners and to hold all the land rights through the establishment of the certificate in order to work freely on the acquired plot. The latter is seen as a win-win contract, and avoids heartburn on the part of the transferor and his family members. To achieve their ends, these 'men of the town-country link' or absenteeism take advantage of institutional pluralism in a post-conflict context. At the current rate of land acquisition linked to the creation of rubber plantations by elites, food security and social cohesion are a real concern. Competition between rubber and food crops is real and is expressed in terms of land availability. The logical consequence of this competition for land is the decline in food crop production, which is hampering the supply of food to the country's cities. This trend partly explains the surge in food prices over the past ten years. A better supervision of the rubber sector supported by a proactive land reform focused on these new actors should enable them to participate more effectively in the sustainable development of their respective localities. These actors could be real agricultural entrepreneurs, innovators bringing development to the host localities, rather than simple rentiers concerned with maximising their profits.

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