

# Large-scale land acquisitions (LSLAs) in Asia

2022

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## SNAPSHOT

*Photo from [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)*

This snapshot presents data on forestry-related large-scale land acquisitions (LSLAs) in Asia. An LSLA is defined as an acquisition of land that is larger than 200 hectares (ha) or double the median land holding, as specified by the national context, through a transfer of land ownership and/or the rights to use and control land by sale, lease, or concession.



**Figure 1.** Distribution of deals in countries in Asia. Larger circles indicate higher numbers of recorded deals for the country.

Landlessness and lack of secure access to and tenure over land, water, and forest resources have been identified as one of the priority issues by many farmer organisations in Asia. As this continues to be a major problem for small-scale farmers, LSLAs have become a serious threat to their livelihoods. LSLAs are often shrouded in mystery, which can allow powerful officials, companies, and individuals to enrich themselves at the expense of the local population, including families of farmers, fishers, forest users and dwellers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, and herders.

The data in this snapshot was downloaded in April 2022 from the Land Matrix Initiative open access platform ([www.landmatrix.org](http://www.landmatrix.org)). The Land Matrix is an independent global land monitoring initiative, which promotes transparency and accountability over land and investments, focusing primarily on LSLAs in agriculture where there is foreign involvement in low- and middle-income countries. Although dynamic and constantly evolving, the data provides a springboard for stimulating data exchange and continuous improvement of the database, as well as encouraging discussions on the impact LSLAs have on people-centred land governance and food security.

The Land Matrix database has recorded 1,009 concluded LSLAs in Asia.<sup>1</sup> The map (Figure 1) shows a glimpse of the distribution of these acquisitions throughout the region, most of which are concentrated in Southeast Asia, where there are numerous plantations for food and non-food agricultural commodities. Out of the 21 countries in the region covered by the database, the top five countries with the highest number of recorded land deals are Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Philippines.

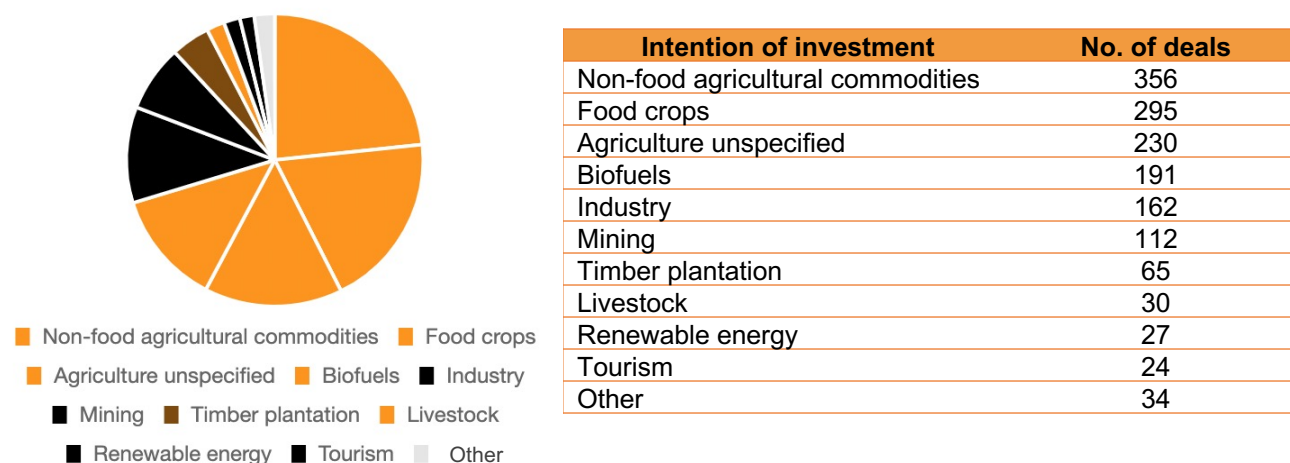
**Table 1.** Top five countries with the highest number of deals (as of April 2022)

| Country       | Number of deals* | Total deal size (in ha)** |
|---------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Indonesia   | 262              | 5,077,250.87              |
| 2 Cambodia    | 229              | 1,898,608.17              |
| 3 Vietnam     | 105              | 545,224.87                |
| 4 Lao PDR     | 93               | 1,428,065.32              |
| 5 Philippines | 87               | 300,764.15                |
| <b>Total:</b> | <b>776</b>       | <b>13,075,812.2</b>       |

\*8,457,493.32 hectares are considered as transnational and 4,618,319.01 as domestic deal computation for the top five countries

\*\*29% of the total area is covered by domestic deals

The majority of LSLAs are used for agriculture (food crops and non-food agricultural commodities, as shown in Figure 2), with most of the investments coming from Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, China, and India (Table 2). In terms of actual investor companies/entities, the Government of Bangladesh is at the top spot, acquiring 2,353,701 ha of land, mostly in Bangladesh. For the private sector, most investments in Asia came from Kolao Farm and Bio Energy Company, acquiring 45,977 ha of land, mainly in Lao PDR.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of LSLAs according to intention (as of April 2022)

**Table 2.** Top five investor countries (as of April 2022)

| Country     | Number of deals* | Total deal size (in ha)** |
|-------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Indonesia | 284              | 6,984,566                 |
| 2 Cambodia  | 219              | 809,729                   |
| 3 Vietnam   | 160              | 2,340,264                 |
| 4 China     | 125              | 1,092,371                 |
| 5 India     | 109              | 4,151,112                 |

\*54% of these are domestic deals

\*\*52% of the total area is covered by domestic deals

<sup>1</sup> Filters used: 1) 200 ha or more; 2) concluded deals only; 3) excludes contract farming and forest concessions; 4) year of initiation is 2000 and up.




These deals have considerable impact to local communities as seen in 2006 in Kapuas Hulu, Indonesia, where land was leased for oil palm plantations (deal #188). Aside from reports of uncompensated indigenous lands, this deal caused division among community members, environmental degradation (forest clearing and water pollution), loss of livelihoods, and impacted indigenous land governance and forest conservation systems. Meanwhile, in 2013, it was reported that the Heng Ruy International Company Limited proceeded with the clearing operations without prior notice to the community in the area of Sangke Muoy commune, Chhaeb, Preach Vihear province in Cambodia (deal #3525). This resulted in the displacement of the people and ethnic minorities in the community. The activity also posed danger in the lives of the people in the area when thousands of logs fell due to the clearing operations of the lumbermen hired by the community.



**It is critical to gather and record information on these deals in order to raise awareness about the impacts of LSLAs at the local and national level, and to lobby for comprehensive land reform that facilitates access to and tenure over land, water, and forest resources for local communities, including farmers, fishers, forest users and dwellers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, and herders.**

The Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) is a regional family farming organisation, which currently has 22 member organisations in 16 countries, representing a total membership of 13 million small-scale women and men farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, forest users and dwellers, pastoralists, and herders. As the Land Matrix Asia Regional Focal Point, AFA aims to increase the involvement of local, national, and regional stakeholders to contribute to improved land governance through data collection. To find out more about LSLAs in Asia, visit our website at [www.landmatrix.org/region/asia](http://www.landmatrix.org/region/asia).

Information on the database regarding LSLAs is not complete. If you would like to report an LSLA in your area or to get involved in this initiative, please connect with us through the channels below:

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