

# **Ethical issues involving long-term land leases: A soil sciences perspective**

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## ***ABSTRACT ORIGINAL***

As populations grow and arable land becomes increasingly scarce, large-scale long-term land leases are signed at a growing rate. Countries and investors with large amounts of financial resources and a strong agricultural industry seek long-term land leases for agricultural exploitation or investment purposes. Leaders of financially poorer countries often advertise such deals as a fast way to attract foreign capital. Much has been said about the short-term social costs these types of leases involve, however, less has been said about the normative dimension of their long-term environmental impact. We therefore will focus on the likely impact such deals have for soil conservation, by: (1) briefly introducing the basics of longterm leasing arrangements by comparing land leases to the renting of buildings; (2) explaining from a soil sciences perspective the difficulties in assessing the current value of an estate and in calculating the damages of soil erosion and degradation; and (3) show how difficult it is to incentivize the conservation of soil quality when one cannot sufficiently and cost-effectively valorise existing environmental capital and eventual future damages. Attempting to oblige tenants through contracts to invest in sustainable stewardship has limited potential when liability payments do not reflect true costs and are hard to enforce. © Wageningen Academic Publishers The Netherlands, 2019. All rights reserved.