

these, more equal regions, there are only few farmers with less than 5 hectares of land. Many smaller farms disappeared since 2005. There is no extreme accumulation in land in very big farms; high land prices, may make this also an expensive undertaking. However, the number of farms that hold more than 100 hectares have been growing considerably over the last decade measured by the data. So, there is land market activity to consolidate land.

Some of these regions have a very high percentage of agricultural land. The two UK regions (UKH16 North & West Norfolk; UKH17 Breckland & South Norfolk), this is 84% of the land. In some other German regions (including Nordfriesland and Dithmarschen in Schleswig-Holstein) and the Netherlands (Zeeuws-Vlaanderen) this is over 80%. In the Finnish regions and in Landes (FR) forests use far more land than agriculture. So, land uses differ by region.

Land is generally held by older farmers: in the UK and Irish regions of this type less than 10% of the land is held by farmers below 40 years of age. Over 90% of this land held by young farmers is held by male farmers. So, the chance that a hectare of land is held by a young female farmer is in these regions and some regions in Germany (mainly in Sachsen-Anhalt), Denmark (Nordjylland), Finland and the Netherlands (Zeeuws-Vlaanderen) below 1%. It is in these regions (except for the German ones) that the percentage of rented land is lowest. Most (84% to 99%) of the land in these regions is held by natural persons. So, family farming in these regions is (still) patriarchal and this practice is being reproduced in the current young generation. Process of allocating land within family relationships is generally not guided by the market, but by traditions; which are, based on these figures, still going strong in these regions.

In this type there are also many regions in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in which there are, just as in some other regions in the East of Germany non-regional shareholders owners of agricultural firms (Tietz, 2017).

Specific emphasis will be on Sachsen-Anhalt (5.2.1.1), a region with, for the German context, low densities, in which large sale land acquisitions have been growing and Zeeuws-Vlaanderen (5.2.1.2) a rural region in The Netherlands, located between the estuary of the Westerschelde and the Belgian border, which urban-rural relationships are primarily cross border, resulting in cross-border opportunities and land uses. These new claims and activities may have a negative impact on access to land for farming.

5.2.1.1 Sachsen-Anhalt (DEE0D Stendal; and the intermediate area of DEE0C Salzlandkreis)

Bunkus and Theesfeld (2018) have studied land grabbing in two areas in Sachsen-Anhalt, the Altmarkkreis in DEE0D Stendal (which is a rural NUTS 3 area) and the intermediate area of DEE0C Salzlandkreis, which is located about 115 km South of the Altmarkkreis. The study looked at the consequences of Large-Scale Land Acquisitions (LSLA) for the rural communities studied. First, Bunkus and Theesfeld (2018) considered quantitative data showing that land is being held by less farmers and that farmers get bigger. Companies own in average more land than natural persons (Bunkus and Theesfeld, 2018). The data also show that most farmers lease their land and that in this way concentration of ownership does not mean that farmers are losing local connections. In a second step of the research extensive qualitative research was done in 4 communities, both in interviewing people in the agricultural sector as people

living in the village communities. In this study the framework of land grabbing was applied (Borras and Franco, 2012; Franco and Borras, Eds. 2013), analysing ‘legal irregularities, non-residence, centralization in decision-making structures, land as investment object, decision-power concentration, and de-facto limited land market access’ (Bunkus and Theesfeld, 2018, 16) to study whether the negative consequences of Large-Scale Land Acquisitions (LSLA) could also be found in the German context. The found ‘rather social subtle effects’ (Bunkus and Theesfeld, 2018, 16) Especially,

‘De-facto access to land is also an issue, when an average farmer has a lesser chance to buy agricultural land due to raising prices or too large plots offered, when confronted with capital-intensive investors with or without agricultural background and sometimes not even coming from the region.’ (Bunkus and Theesfeld, 2018, 16)

Government organisations selling land to the highest bidder support the process that economic power rules; selling land in smaller lots is a first step taken to make the land more affordable for smaller farmers. This may however not be sufficient; in the German context it is highly relevant to consider the lease market as well, as according to Bunkus and Theesfeld (2018) 71% of the cultivated land is leased in the East of Germany

5.2.1.2 Zeeuws-Vlaanderen (NL)

Zeeuws-Vlaanderen is the only NUTS 3 area in the Netherlands that is classified as rural by EUROSTAT. It is located between the estuary of the Westerschelde and the Belgian border. Until 2003 it was only connected by ferry or a detour via Belgium (Antwerp) with the rest of the Netherlands, which contributed to its relative isolation. Cross-border commuting was very low (Meijers *et al.*, 2013). Currently it is connected with a toll tunnel, and as there is only one other road where toll is being paid by the car drivers in the Netherlands, and there is no alternative road, this is contested as contributing to a more isolated development (Meijers *et al.*, 2013; Meijers *et al.*, 2018). In relation to the soil (*zavel*, that is, sandy clay) and traditional crops (flask, which is of relative minor importance nowadays) it is connected to Flanders. Although, the local dialect originally has been Flemish (Will, 2004), after four centuries of a border, ‘...the southern phenomena are disappearing (...). In this respect one could say that the people of Zeeuws-Vlaanderen become more and more people of Zeeland.’ (Will, 2004, 283) Furthermore, the border marks a strong difference in landscape and culture (Van den Berghe *et al.*, 2020). South of the border there are the cities of Gent, Brugge and upstream the Schelde, Antwerp, and a web of suburban sprawl along the roads connecting towns and suburbs (De Decker, 2011). Zeeuws-Vlaanderen is predominantly an open area, in which population is concentrated in villages and towns. Traditionally there have been services oriented towards the Belgian population across the border making use of different identities and regulations, including restaurants accommodating busloads of Belgians to eat mussels, a large furniture firm, sex shops and cannabis-smoking facilities. There is also industrial development in a zone along the canal towards the harbour of Gent. Over the past decades, cross-border land market exchanges have taken place. In response to a perspective of population decline communities have advertised housing in this area to families across the border. Many of these families stay primarily oriented towards Belgium, including that their kids go to school in their area of origin. This relationships had as result that during the Global Financial Crisis around 2008, the housing market in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen did not follow the