

Mozambique: "pro-Savana" Will Not Deprive Farmers of Land

26 DECEMBER 2012

Maputo — The Mozambican government has insisted that no farmer will lose land as a result of the "Pro-Savana" project in the country.

Pro-Savana's full title is "Triangular Cooperation Programme for the Agricultural Development of Tropical Savanna in Mozambique, Brazil and Japan, and the area of implementation is the Nacala Corridor, which covers much of the northern part of the country.

Speaking on a joint programme of Radio Mozambique and Mozambican Televisions, Agriculture Minister Jose Pacheco said that the project will not deprive peasant farmers of arable land, particularly those who claim that it will.

"In our country there is no place for the return of crown companies", said Pacheco. "The small farmers will keep their land areas".

Pacheco's reference was to the practice of the Portuguese colonial state, in the late 19th century, of granting concessions to foreign companies, under which they were given 50 year leases on enormous tracts of Mozambican territory. These companies (the Zambezia Company and the Niassa Company) operated as states within a state. They could raise their own taxes and export duties as long as they handed over 7.5 per cent of their profits to the Portuguese state.

Pacheco explained that the major purpose of Pro-Savana is to develop agricultural technologies to induce an increase in productivity. "Hence the project envisages setting up a network of agricultural research laboratories in the Nacala Corridor,

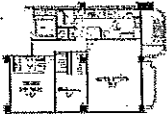


He pointed out that small peasant farmers are currently responsible for 90 per cent of Mozambican agricultural production. "So to develop agriculture, we are betting heavily on the small farmers", Pacheco said. "We want these small farmers to expand to medium and eventually even large scale".

Pacheco added that Pro-Savana is a replica of a development project that occurred 30 years ago in Brazil, in the Amazon region. He insisted that implementation of the project will obey Mozambican legislation, particularly the Investment Law.

The whole strategy of negotiating private investments in the Nacala Corridor, said Pacheco, hinged on the social and economic benefits to the producers in the areas covered by the project.

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