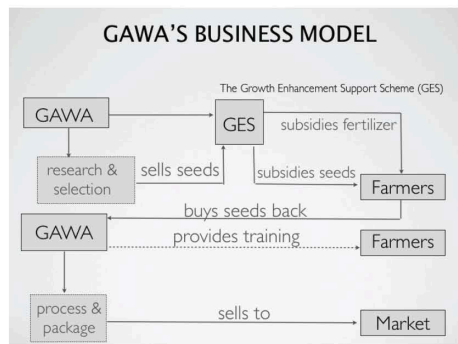


# NEITHER “FRIENDSHIP FARM” NOR “LAND GRAB”: CHINA’S AGRICULTURAL INVESTMENT IN NIGERIA

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My dissertation, titled “Migration and Social Life of the Chinese entrepreneurs in Ghana,” is an ethnographic study of the transnational lives and everyday practices of Chinese entrepreneurs in Ghana as well as their impact on the Ghanaian and Chinese society, economy, and culture respectively. It is the first step of a larger research agenda aiming to understand a bigger question: What are the implications of China’s global economic expansion to the Sub-Saharan African countries? In 2014, I have focused on the agriculture sector among other areas.

China’s agricultural engagements with Africa have two main types of collaboration models. The first is China’s comprehensive aid program that includes agricultural technology demonstration centers, sending agricultural experts, training African farmers and technicians, as well as participating FAO’s “South-South” cooperation framework. The second model includes investment projects by Chinese entrepreneurs that produce locally and serve locally in Africa. My findings in Nigeria represent a new model that involves African governments’ agricultural support programs, advantageous Chinese agricultural enterprises, well-established Chinese engineering contractor corporations in Africa, and local farmers.

In April, I received a small grant to conduct a scoping study of a Chinese company called the Green Agricultural

West Africa Ltd.(GAWA) located in the town of Warra in the Kebbi state of Nigeria. GAWA is initiated by China Geo-engineering Construction Overseas Corporation Nigeria (CGCOC). CGCOC Nigeria has extensive engineering contractor experiences and has committed itself to agricultural development since 2005. It obtained 2025 hectares of land on a 99-year lease from the Kebbi state in 2006. Later it formed a joint venture with Yuan Longping High-tech Agriculture Co Ltd. Shandong Denghai Seeds (specializes in maize) and Zhangjiakou Academy of Agricultural Sciences (specializes in millet) later also joined as shareholders. GAWA currently grows 400ha of rice in the rainy season and 100ha of rice in the dry season.

GAWA has three ongoing businesses now. The most developed one is to use Chinese technology to produce rice seeds. In what is called the outgrower program, GAWA provides foundation seeds to the participating Nigerian farmers. Next GAWA buys the seeds produced by the outgrowers, processes and packages them, and then sells the certified seeds to Kebbi state. The latter sells those certified seeds to farmers who have registered their names into a national database with subsidies. Outgrowers produce on their own land and GAWA sets up several regional centers and provide technological support. GAWA also let adjacent outgrowers to use their

land to produce seeds (see Figure 1).

Through this outgrower program, GAWA has participated in Nigeria’s Growth Enhancement Support program, and local farmers gain training and reduce their cost of production. GAWA’s partners gain a well-established partner that provides infrastructural input and human capital. Such partnership thus serves as a conduit for them to achieve the goal of “Go Global” and exporting Chinese agricultural technologies.

GAWA is not the only agribusiness endeavor of CGCOC. According to its manager, they have obtained a 54ha land near Abuja to build an agricultural industrial park. They plan to demonstrate hybrid rice and maize developed with Chinese technologies, experiment ecological farming, and show case agricultural processing machinery from China.

Although the case in Nigeria is not a “land grab”, it is relevant to the trend where large corporations are exporting farming technologies to the global south and endangering small-scale farming livelihoods.

Yang Jiao is a PhD candidate in anthropology. Support provided by Johns Hopkins University-SAIS China Africa Research Initiative with funding from the Smith Richardson Foundation.

