

# Of Collusions and Collaborations: A Case of Land Grab in Sindh, Pakistan

Roots for Equity

October 12, 2012

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This research study is part of the collaboration of PAN AP and its partners on mapping and documentation of land grabbing in selected Asian countries. This initiative is carried out with support from MISEREOR. This publication may be cited in part as long as PAN AP and Roots for Equity are properly cited.

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### ABOUT PAN AP

Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PAN AP) is one of the five regional centres of PAN, a global network dedicated to eliminating the harm caused to humans and the environment by pesticides and promoting biodiversity-based ecological agriculture.

PAN AP's vision is a society that is truly democratic, equal, just, and culturally diverse; based on the principles of food sovereignty, gender justice and environmental sustainability. It has developed strong partnerships with peasants, agricultural workers and rural women movements in the Asia Pacific region and guided by the strong leadership of these grassroots groups, has grown into a reputable advocacy network with a firm Asian perspective.

PAN AP's mission lies in strengthening people's movements to advance and assert food sovereignty, biodiversity-based ecological agriculture, and the empowerment of rural women; protect people and the environment from highly hazardous pesticides; defend the rice heritage of Asia; and resist the threats of corporate agriculture and neo-liberal globalization.

Currently, PAN AP comprises 108 network partner organizations in the Asia Pacific region and links with about 400 other CSOs and grassroots organizations regionally and globally.

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## Background

In the past few years the issue of global land grabbing has received much attention due to the vast scale of the phenomenon. In general, the agrochemical model of agricultural production has been viciously exploitative, leaving not only millions in abject poverty, hunger and without human dignity. At the same time the chemical-based system has also been very extremely harmful to the ecology disrupting all natural cycles, destroying biodiversity endangering many species and eradicating countless others, responsible for proliferating monoculture which allows only profit intensification of the rich transnational corporations, all having their base in the imperialist capitalist countries.

With the corporate agricultural production system spreading its tentacles in nearly every sector the latest spate has been to lease agricultural land in many parts of the world for various reasons. These reasons include from food production to ensure food security for populations in the country of the encroaching parties, to food and agricultural production as an investment and a profit venture. Such land grabbing is being carried out by both the corporate sector as well states. Mostly, states are involved to ensure national food security for their populations. Given, that the state of cooperation rarely exists, the relationship between land providers and leasers is based on imperialist relationship.

Pakistan has also been facing a massive level of land grabbing. Numerous media reports on land grabbing in

Pakistan is a regular feature in the country. For instance, it has been reported that a big conglomerate the Charoen Pokphand (CP) group from Thailand, considered one of the largest food groups in Asia has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Punjab Board of Investment and Trade, Government of Punjab to invest in agro-industry and food business.<sup>1</sup> The CP group has been showing an interest in land surveys as well to set up business such as feed mills, breeder and boiler farms, and hatcheries.

Similarly, the United Arab Emirates has also been showing a keen interest in agriculture investments and land deals in the country. In 2011, UAE (which imports nearly 85% of its food) had purchased nearly 324,000 hectares of land in Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan.

Such wide range international agro-industry investments in Pakistan are often reported. However, very little is known or researched about such reports, nor are there academic research studies or people-based campaigns or action researches which give the true impact of such investments on food production or communities where land grab is happening.

In order to overcome these short-comings, Roots for Equity was able to collaborate with Pesticide Action Network in a coordinated research on land grabbing in various parts of Asia.

The research study has been planned based on the following guidelines:

## **Overall objectives:**

To understand the phenomenon of land grabbing carried out by a transnational corporation Al Dahra, UAE Pakistan and its resultant socio-economic impacts on communities where land grabbing occurred.

## **Specific Objectives:**

Based on the overall objective, specific objectives of the research study are:

1. To describe the current level of ownership and control of the selected communities over the land and natural resources
2. To describe the circumstances and manner that the land is being grabbed
3. To identify the impacts of land grabbing on the selected communities
4. To elaborate the ongoing resistance and organization of the communities against the land grabbing, if any.

## **Methodology:**

The methodology adopted by Roots for Equity for carrying out the research in hand was based on using qualitative methods which included the following:

1. Desk Research
2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)
3. Key Informant Interviews (KII)
4. Participant Observation

Desk research was carried out for finding out information about the key players in the research study and to highlight any media coverage on the related land grab site or relevant actors. In addition, the desk research also helped in providing a background to the study which ranged from current information on land grab to previous patterns of land ownership and class divisions and positions of power in the context of land ownership patterns.

Apart from the desk research, FGDs as well as KII interviews were carried out with communities and community members in the area where land grab by Al Dahra had occurred.

After an initial reconnaissance visit, a check list of potential questions was developed which guided the FGDs as well as KII interviews.

Four KIIs were held in the villages, of which two were with women. In total, five FGDs were held in the villages where land grabbing has occurred. Of these, two were with women. FGDs and KIIs were held with Muslims and Hindus (Meghwar and Kohli castes).

## **Land Grab in Pakistan: Pre-existing Land Ownership Structures**

In the Indian subcontinent Mughal emperors introduced state ownership of the land, based on collective responsibility. A village only had to pay some royalty (one sixth or half of the produce) to the state. Later in the colonial period this hereditary system was replaced by *zamindari* (land lord) system of collecting revenue from the peasantry. A *zamindar* was responsible as an official representative of the British Raj for the collection of revenue.<sup>2</sup>

The British in fact created two different revenue collection systems or land tax i.e., *Ryotwari* and the Permanent Settlement. According to *Ryotwari* system peasants were given the right of land inheritance and transfer to others; while Permanent Settlement system, introduced in 1793, favored *zamindars* describing peasants as tenant at will (also known as *hari* and having few, if any, legal rights, including occupancy rights) of the land lords.<sup>3</sup>

Besides feudal lords land was also distributed amongst military men. This trend which could be traced back to the Mughal period was also promoted during the British *Raj*. Since the 1880s land up to 550 acres could be allotted to military officers. This trend continued until 1940s. After the settlement of canal colonies in military's land share was decreased but production increased due to excessive water availability that ultimately boosted the profit ratio of military officers.<sup>4</sup> Hence it is rightly pointed out that:

The Pakistani people in general and peasantry in particular have been bearing the repercussions of this feudal system of colonial era in to the 21st century. The feudal system of past paved the way to form

two brutal forces in the country namely that of the Pakistan Military and the feudal barons. Both have time and again collaborated for ensuring smooth functioning of class – based system dominated by the feudal elites and military leadership in the country. Thus they have ensured the exclusion of peasantry from access/ right to land which they till with their toil and blood.<sup>5</sup>

Thus at its inception, Pakistan's agriculture sector inherited an abusive system of the colonial era when, according to Government of Pakistan, only seven per cent feudal class owned 56 per cent of the land and only one per cent of the elite class owned 30 per cent of the land. After the British colonial rule finished and Pakistan became an independent state in 1947, the Pakistani state moved forward with the same structure rather than taking necessary steps to change this exploitative system in agriculture.<sup>6</sup>

## History of Land Reforms in Pakistan

*Hari* (peasant) Committee established few months before independence presented the first land reform report before the Government of Pakistan. The report had two parts: one was called the majority report and other was called the minority report. Majority report was in favor of continuation of existing (feudal) agricultural structure, opposing the idea of equal land distribution among peasants, but the minority report said that 'there should be complete abolition of *zamindari* system and all of the land must be returned to state and redistributed among peasants. This second part of the report was not allowed to be published for more than one year in the country.<sup>7</sup>

The second agrarian reform report was presented by *zarai* (agriculture) committee formed by Pakistan Muslim League in 1949 and members of the committee were also renowned feudal lords of the country. Report consisted both long term and short term measures. Under long term measures the size of large land holdings was decreased up to 150 acres for irrigated areas and 450 acres for non-irrigated areas. Land at above this ceiling was to be taken by the state for redistribution among tenants, small farmers and landless workers. Following were the short term objectives of the land reform committee that recommended a line of action:<sup>8</sup>

- Tenancy period of at least 15 years with a written document between landlord and tenant.
- Landlord should not be allowed to maintain more than 25 acres (10 hectares) of land, a size which actually allows the land to be a tenant – at will.
- The report mentioned that the share of landlord in the total produce should not exceed 2/5th and this was supposed to be paid in cash.
- Other recommendation included: minimum wages, fixed working hours, unemployment insurance, health insurance, pensions, and medical aid.<sup>9</sup>

Another move towards land reforms was taken in 1950 in the shape of Provincial Tenancy Act, basically these were the amendments in the Tenancy Act 1887 legislated and enacted by the British Raj. The amendments led to the abolishment of payments of levies and pre- requisites to the land lord by the tenant. The Tenancy Act of Sindh was also enacted at the same time. Another amendment in Tenancy Acts was made in 1952 providing fix tenure of one to three years for the share cropper and 40% share to be granted to the land lord in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa (formerly NWFP); However, in the Sindh province, this share was set at 50%.<sup>10</sup>

Political power of the feudal class increased after the 1950s elections. They obtained 80 % seats in Punjab and 90 % seats in Sindh assemblies. A political debate on land reforms and green revolution policies was initiated during this period. In October 1958 General Ayub Khan imposed martial law in the country and remained in power for ten years. Under his military dictatorship, land reforms and green revolution policies were implemented with the support of the feudal class of Pakistan.<sup>11</sup>

With the support of the military regime, the West Pakistan Land Reform Commission Committee comprising revenue personals had no representation of the peasants. The committee recommended a ceiling of 500 acres for irrigated and 1000 acres for non-irrigated land area for individuals including incentives such as, land up to 150 acres for orchards, 450 acres could be transferred to the heirs and 15 acres to female dependants. Due to such incentives only 1.9 million acres of land was resumed by the government. After 1967, 50 % of 1.9 million acres resumed land was sold

## **Of Collusions and Collaborations: A Case of Land Grab in Sindh, Pakistan**

to small and landless peasants; and the remaining land was sold to rich farmers and military officials.<sup>12</sup>

The second land reforms were carried out by Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in 1972. It needs to be pointed out that Mr. Bhutto also belonged to a feudal family. Bhutto's reforms stipulated a ceiling of 150 acres of irrigated land and 300 acres of non-irrigated land. Excess land was taken without compensation. A total of 1.3 million acres of land were resumed of which 0.9 million acres were redistributed and only one per cent land less tenants and small owners benefitted from those land reforms.<sup>13</sup>

After these land reforms a new ordinance, the Ordinance II of 1977 was passed with a ceiling of 100 acres for irrigated land and compensation of bonds for land lords. The Land Reform Act Ordinance 1977 was amended in the regime of General Ziaul Haq with redistribution of only 0.9 % uncultivable and infertile land.<sup>14</sup>

Keeping this historical perspective of land reforms in view one should be clear about how the feudal and elite class, who owe their existence to their colonial masters, have controlled the fate of this country with the alliance of the military and civil bureaucracy. Furthermore, after the end of cold war, to strengthen their power base they have welcomed the imperialist neoliberal agenda.

With the promulgation of the WTO (and agreements such as the Agreement on Agriculture and other free trade agreements) imperialism got further access to natural resources of the Third World countries which could be exploited and plundered without restrictions. Agriculture sector is now wide open for traders and foreign investors. This phenomenon has further changed the dynamics of traditional agriculture and has promoted corporate agriculture farming through heavy machines, massive use of fertilizers, pesticides and hybrid and genetically modified seeds.

Pushing forward the imperialist agenda of foreign trade and investment the Governments of Pakistan first, under the leadership General Ayub Khan promoted the Green Revolution (an alliance of small and landless farmers in Pakistan, namely Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor

Tehreek call it 'the Black Revolution'), and second, during General Pervez Musharraf's regime, started leasing farm lands by passing the Corporate Farming Ordinance in 2001. The ordinance was approved by the cabinet in 2004 when the provinces identified 1.14 million hectares of land that were available to be leased.<sup>15</sup> This law now allows Pakistani land to be leased to foreign companies. Features of this ordinance are given in annexure I.

In the fiscal year 2006-7, Pakistan Board of Investment charted out 'the Investor Information Guide' mentioning the land availability and other resources with policy guide lines for foreign and local agriculture investors and information of land availability data of every province. Text can be seen in annexures II, III, IV & V.

As a result of such policies, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed a MoU with Government of Balochistan for the lease of 150,000 hectares near Mirani Dam. Since then other similar deals have been negotiated. A Dubai-based investment group also acquired 324,000 hectares of Pakistani farmland another Qatar based Meat and Livestock Company (Mawashi) is reported to have invested one billion dollars into corporate farming in Pakistan. They negotiated with the Sindh government to lease around 12,140 hectares in Shikarpur, Larkana and Sukkur districts of Sindh province.<sup>16</sup>

### **Land Grab in Pakistan: A Case Study of Al Dahra in Mirpurkhas**

Pakistan's agriculture economy is dominated by feudal lords in the country. As members of the parliament they enjoy powers that are used to manipulate laws according to their vested interests. They also join hands with foreign investors to make large profits. Such an example can be seen from the following case of land grab.

Taking advantage of his power and post, Sindh Agriculture Minister, Ali Nawaz Shah, signed an agreement of land lease with a UAE-based agriculture company called Al Dahra for a period of 10 years in Mirpurkhas District, Sindh. According to the locals and company employees, the leased area encompasses up to 3200 acres.



Bungalow of Sindh Provincial Agriculture Minister and feudal lord, Syed Ali Nawaz Shah in his village

Syed Ali Nawaz Shah is a feudal lord, politician and (reported) industrialist holding vast agriculture lands as well as a sugar mill in Mirpurkhas, Sindh. Since 1977 he has held different positions in government institutions. As an elected member of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the most dominant political party in Pakistan, and which is currently in the government. Mr Ali Nawaz Shah is currently serving as the Agriculture Minister of the second largest province of the country, Sindh.

According to some news agencies, Mr Syed Ali Nawaz Shah has been meeting with UAE government officials and people in political power. For instance, it was reported that Mr Ali Nawaz had meetings with the Abu Dhabi Ruler's Representative in the Western Region, H. H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan where

methods to boost cooperation between the UAE and Pakistan in the area of agriculture were discussed.<sup>17</sup> Based on the information posted at the Al Dahra website, the contract on leasing land to Al Dahra in Mirpurkhas was initiated in 2007 and the meeting between the agriculture minister and Sheik Hamdan bin Zayed was at a much later date. However, there is clear conflict of interest, given that the minister is able to use his official contacts to broker private business ventures.

The report also emphasizes the tribute paid by the Sindh Agriculture minister to the Sheikh "for reaching out to the poor, the needy and people in distress in various parts of the world." However, the following report than expounds on the impact of land grabbing happening through the minister's hand on his feudal land and the impacts of such an act on the most marginalized poor citizen of Pakistan: Hindu Kohli community in rural Sindh: as the study will detail later, the impacts of land grabbing in Mirpurkhas has indeed 'reached out to the poor' but the result has been loss of livelihood, indebtedness, hunger and poverty.

During the focus group discussions and walking in the villages, there was tight surveillance of the research team. One female researcher, as she was conducting a FGD with women in a village home in the Minister's village noticed a person climbing on the roof of the a building (which was just across the Minister's house) and looked into the home where she was sitting. He stood and watched the process for some minutes and then went away.

There was a general sense of fear and unwillingness to say anything negative about the Minister. Respondents, especially in the Kohli community assured the team many times that they had no complaints and were very satisfied with the feudal lord. There was security and safety here and indeed people from other parts of the district envied them their safe abode.

Comments made by labor or villagers which would point fingers to Al Dahra or the Minister were negated in a group. It was felt that people were afraid to make comments in public, especially if they felt somebody could testify on them having said anything that could vilify the Minister or the Al Dahra company.

## Mirpurkhas: an Overview



At present the area of District Mirpurkhas is 2925 sq kilometers. Mirpurkhas's current population is 1,569,030; its annual growth ratio is 3.53% (2010) and is the fourth largest city in the province of Sindh. It lies between 24°-46' N 68°-54' to 69°-30' E.<sup>18</sup> Because of minimum industrial growth; more than 80% labor force works in the agriculture sector. The district has only a few cotton ginning factories and one sugar mill.

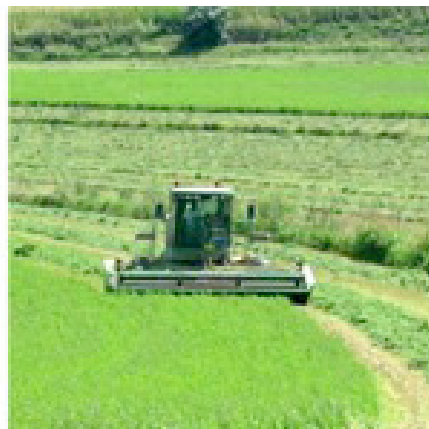
Mirpurkhas district has two main cropping seasons; *Kharif* (summer) and *Rabi* (winter). The *Kharif* season starts from April-May and ends in October-November while the *Rabi* starts from November-December

and ends in April-May. However, due to regional variation in temperature, several factors determine crop patterns, sowing, and harvesting time. The crops can be further categorized into major and minor crops. Wheat, cotton, rice sugar-cane are the major crops of the district; sunflower, onion, *jawar* (sorghum), rapeseed, mustard, maize and barley fall in the category of minor crops.<sup>19</sup>

## Al Dahra<sup>20</sup>



Al Dahra Agriculture a privately held company was formed in 1995 for agriculture and animal production in the UAE. It extended its network in various parts of the globe with an investment plan of Dh 1 billion (US\$272.2 million), leasing land in Europe, the US, South Asia and North Africa to boost UAE's food security.



Source: <http://www.aldahra.com/animal-feed.html>



Due to food inflation in 2007, many Gulf countries embarked on land purchase in other countries for their food security. It was at this time that Al Dahra won government contracts for importing 50 % of alfalfa and other grass from the US, Spain Egypt and Pakistan.

The company owns thousands of hectares of land for the production of alfalfa and other grass in countries like Egypt, Spain, the EU and the US. The company also produces fruits and vegetables exporting from Egypt and Pakistan to the Middle East and Asia, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, China and Korea and plans to expand into rice cultivation.

## Land Lease Agreements

Al Dahra's association with Pakistan commenced in 2007, by the undertaking of a project in Mirpurkhas (city in Sindh district). The principal aim of this project was to grow Alfalfa and Rhodes grass for export to the UAE.<sup>21</sup>

Inquiring about the total area of land that was contracted, the research team got different responses but the figure of 3,200 acres was often used and hence may be close to the actual figure. Al Dahra has acquired 500 acres of land which is believed to be owned by Minister Nawaz Shah's niece. The niece is the only daughter of his brother who had passed away some years ago. She was given this land as part of her inheritance after her marriage. This was the first site where land grab has occurred. Al Dahra also has leased land in Syed Khadim Ali Shah's own village, where the bulk of the land lies, at least 2,000 acres or more.

In a focus group interview, an informant narrated that in land accompanying the village, Al Dahra company is producing grass on approximately 180 acres but the actual land under lease is 500 acres. The informants did not have any information about the contract, or the amount being paid by Al Dahra as land lease to the land lord. However, according to a villager, the contract was originally at Rs. 10,000 per acre for five years but now the contract has been renewed for another five years at Rs. 25,000 per acre.

## Management and Workforce



Rhodes Grass fields in Village Syed Ali Nawaz Shah

Al Dahra Agriculture Company in Mirpurkhas has hired two higher management personnel from Sudan. One of them Mr. Khalid Medani has served as the Project Manager in Pakistan since 2008 with over 10 years of experience, he has specialized in agricultural field engineering, hay, farm machinery and surface irrigation. He is a B. Sc. graduate in Agricultural Engineering from Gezira University.<sup>22</sup>

According to Al Dahra employee and other focus group informants, the company has provided accommodation to higher management personnel to live with their family in the village of Syed Ali Nawaz Shah.

Tractor drivers and machine operators are hired from two particular castes, the Khosa and Khaskhaili tribes. Al Dahra has employed 8 - 10 guards from the same tribes as watch man for the grass fields. Al Dahra supervisor informed that company has employed 50 – 60 local salaried laborers at Rs. 8,000; their working hours, according to him were from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm and they were also paid over time. He said that there are four water courses and at least 15 people are employed on each water course.

Drivers are paid Rs. 12,000 per month and heavy machine operators were getting paid Rs. 40,000, monthly. According to the supervisor, all labor has been hired locally. He said that company has hired one person from every house of the village.

## Of Collusions and Collaborations: A Case of Land Grab in Sindh, Pakistan

However, statements made by the Al Dahra employee were negated by many in the first village where land has been occupied. According to FGDs, the company had not employed people from their village; all of the workers were hired from the Minister's own village.

According to the information collected, previously 15 workers were employed on one water course but they have reduced the number to only 5-6 laborers. This means that currently no more than 24 people are employed around the four water courses.

They are paid a minimum wage of Rs. 6,500 per month. In the beginning they had been paid Rs 4,500, which was later increased to Rs 6,000. In the past few months the pay has been increased to Rs 6,500. Their work includes watering the grass fields, realigning the land (called *banoo*) spreading urea, and cutting grass at the sides of the field (which machines were unable to do) as well as any other support work needed.

However, workers employed on the field were given no off day, not even one day a week. If people did not come to work, their pay would be deducted.

### Production and Distribution

Rhodes grass cultivation process is being done by heavy machinery. Land preparation is the first phase of cultivation. In this process blade machinery is used with tractors. Seed sowing process is also done by machine.



Mango Orchard in village Sayed Ali Nawaz Shah and Land being prepared for grass production

Automatic heavy machines are also used for watering, spreading urea, and harvesting. Work was mechanized to such an extent, that machines would also make bundles of the cut grass. Then, bundles are picked by loader machine from the field and loaded in containers for import to the UAE. These are sealed containers which are taken directly from the fields to the port in Karachi, approximately 200 kilometers away.

Grass was ready for harvesting in 15 days to a month. The average capacity of harvesting machines was cutting 5-6 acres of land in an hour. Generally, grass harvested from one acre of land would result in 5-6 bales, each of which was of 14-15 maunds. During the winter months (November to February) grass production declines such that only one harvest is obtained in two months during the four months of winter.

Grass production data vary in the area: according to an informant grass was cut twice in a month. According to the Al Dahra supervisor, it depends on the fertility of land somewhere it takes 10 to 20 days and some where it takes one month.

Grass seed was imported from Australia and is called Rhodes; locals know it as *baroo*. However, this is not an indigenous grass and was not known to the area previous to Al Dahra introducing it in the area. Once cultivated, the seed does not need to be sown again, and bears grass for many years.

A focus group informant confirmed that the grass is imported to UAE. This is also clearly mentioned in the website of Al Dahra. The informant said that there are rumors that the production of baroo (Rhodes grass) is used as camel fodder. However, it is worth mentioning that grass on 3,000 acres could not be only for fodder, and it is quite possible that some other products might also be prepared from this grass.

According to locals and Al Dahra farm workers, Alfalfa and Rhodes grass production requires high quantity of water and is the reason that the company has constructed concrete water courses.

According to a labor, the company has been sanctioned a minor water channel from the Government of Sindh. The new water course has been made in the last year (2011). There are four concrete water courses in

this area, and the company also use big water turbine motors to lift water from water courses in the days of water shortage.

## Land Acquisition Circumstances

More than 150 houses of Meghwar community ( a subcast of the Hindus) , resident of village Syed Khadim Ali, Shah had worked for generations, on the lands of Syed Qutab Ali Shah as share croppers and peasants. A focus group informant, said that there was a disperse settlement of Meghwar community around Mirpurkhas city.

‘We were very satisfied with our *murshid* (land lord) as he was very kind, humble and a helping person’, told a villager. After his death land passed on to his daughter whose husband removed the Meghwar community’s *munshi* (supervisor), and in his place employed another person as *munshi*, not from their village and was considered to be close to the new landlord, the son-in-law of the deceased landlord.

According to community people Qutab Ali Shah’s son-in-law, neglected the land, and was not prone to visit the land. His employed *munshi* started exploiting peasants by giving them low wages. Deliberate reduction in the sharecroppers share, and ensuing debts pushed them to slowly withdraw from working on their lands and the community started seeking other work (tailoring, driving, carpentry; daily labor for house construction, vegetable market, on agriculture farms and in brick kilns) in the Mirpur Khas city.



Al Dahra concrete made water course in village Syed Ali Nawaz Shah

With time the land was left unused and cultivation was stopped for a period. After two, three years the uncultivated land was given to Al Dahra. The people who used to work there, therefore, were not directly pushed off the land, but it was done much more shrewdly and in a manner which did not put the blame on the landlord.

According to the villagers, one day they heard that land was being prepared using machinery, and that it was given for ten years to Al Dahra for grass production. Though, the village people had stopped working on the land, they were still accessing it for fodder for their livestock as well for other purposed. According to them “now we, cannot even get a single *dinghri* (wild shrub) for making *baar* (a boundary wall made from wild shrubs around the mud houses or/ and the village) .

## Livelihood

About 80 per cent of the labor force works in the agriculture sector in Mirpur Khas district. Due to heavy rain fall in 2011, crop devastation has massively impacted agriculture labor force of the area. According to a driver in the area, his inability to get work had forced him to sell his two goats at Rs. 2,000, an astronomically cheap price as he had no other means of obtaining food for his family.

An informant, they could still find work as *haris* (sharecroppers) in other villages but they did not want to do so because of the exploitation and discrimination



Al Dahra’s Rhodes grass harvesting and production heavy machine, at village Sayed Ali Nawaz Shah

**Of Collusions and Collaborations:  
A Case of Land Grab in Sindh, Pakistan**



Al Dahra Rhodes prepared grass production in village Syed Khadim Ali Shah

practiced as a norm. ‘We have work in the fields from morning to sunset the whole year, and when the crops are harvested we find that after deduction of our debts we return to our homes empty handed. So, open labor in the cities is now suitable for us’, said an informant.

Describing daily labor situation, a brick kiln worker told us that there are many other land lords in the area who are relatives of the Syed family but they are employing people on their agriculture lands as daily labor on very minimum wages i. e. , for cotton picking, grass picking from cotton fields etc. According to him, we do not have any other choice but to work for them. He added ‘even if I demand Rs. 250, it is no use as another person will agree to work for Rs. 200.’

A worker said that his other family members were also working as labor. His livestock had died in the recent rains; they were a source of livelihood for them as they used to give 4- 5 kg of milk which could be sold at a nearby local hotel. This money allowed them to purchase flour. His family members also work during wheat harvesting. If they would harvest one acre of land, they would obtain 4-5 maunds as payment. The same situation was also highlighted by Muslim women focus group. According to a woman at least one male member from every house works and could earn Rs. 300, however, up to Rs. 100 of this wage is consumed in transport fare.

Highlighting miserable conditions, a young boy working as motor mechanic in Mirpur Khas city said, ‘how can

we save from Rs. 200 to 250, because all of the money goes into household expenditure’. On the other side there are many social requirements like marriage in the community or needs of the children and expenses for funerals, health etc, so they have to sell their livestock for these requirements. This was also mentioned by women focus group that they are rearing their livestock to meet basic requirements. It is important to note that rural population rear live stock just for the fulfillment of basic expenses, as for them their livestock is equivalent to money in the bank. Focus group informants said that they don’t have any bank balance as they are daily workers; hence such type of live stock is their only asset.

According to the locals, there are no other job opportunities nor has Al Dahra provided any other livelihood facilities. Initially, for first two months they hired local women for grass cutting on the provision of some biscuits and milk. There is very little work for the locals on the farms maintained by Al Dahra because of almost total automation of the production process.

Most of the community youngsters work in orchards during mango picking season and earn easily 3– 4 thousands in a month. However orchards contracts are also awarded to outsiders who bring orchard labor with them, often these contractors came from Multan in Punjab. A Meghwar community leader said that they were living by helping each other mutually.

‘There was plenty of grass for our live stock in our homes but now we are feeding them from remote areas’, said a women informant. Human beings are facing similar conditions ‘whenever we have money we eat more and when we earn less we eat less’. We used to have our own *lasi* (milk and water drink made from curd) , milk and butter from our livestock. We also use to take out our livestock for grazing but this has also stopped even since the company occupied the land.

Meghwar peasants recalled that 7 – 8 years ago they had worked on those lands ‘as share cropper in the period of Syed Qutab Ali Shah & Ali Nawaz Shah producing cotton, sugarcane, wheat, chili and vegetables, rearing cows, buffalos and goats with abundance of milk, curd and butter but today all that has vanished’. According to a brick kiln worker “Qutab Ali Shah’s son in law’s munshis started to reduce the sharecroppers share up to ¼ of the harvested crops; previously there were four to



Al Dahra Rhodes Grass production ready bales for shipment in village Sayed Ali Nawaz Shah



New prepared land for production of Al Dahra's Rhodes grass in village Sayed Ali Nawaz Shah

five animals in every home but now we cannot afford animals due to unavailability of grass. Our daily labor earning is up to Rs. 200 – 250, the reason we are living hand to mouth. How can we feed our livestock in this situation?’

According to a woman in focus group, 8 - 10 years ago all many crops were cultivated on the lands leased to Al Dahra. However, increasing shortage of irrigation water led to the land going barren and was later leased, to an Arab Company”. It was also reported that before Al Dahra’s contract, 400-500 acres of land was cultivated but cultivation declined up 100 to 150 acres due to water shortage. Some of the villagers continued

to worked in the fields as *haris* (sharecroppers) and some of them went to Mirpurkhas city for daily labor work and some learnt tailoring work.

Meghwar and Kolhi women worked in cotton fields and for wheat harvesting easily earned 2 and 2 ½ maunds wheat for one acre of wheat harvesting. Ten to 12 maund of wheat used to be stored in every home, enough for 4 - 5 months. Usually a family consist 12 members and consumed 3- 5 kg flour per day.

According to a worker he was receiving Rs. 6, 500 since the last two years. He had five brothers and two sisters, three elder brothers work as tailors in Mirpur Khas city while two younger ones were studying and looking after livestock at home. ’

### **Impacts on food security**

Average wheat yield in Sindh is 30 maund per acre, 3200 acres of land can produce 96,000 maunds of wheat, but after land lease to Al Dahra this is not possible. As mentioned before, the area under land grab was used for cultivating wheat, chili, cotton and other crops. Now the communities living in the land grab area purchase vegetables and flour from their daily wages, and the price of flour and vegetables increases periodically. It needs to be mentioned, that while during a focus group discussion, a man from the village came in. He was quite agitated and informed everybody that the price of flour had gone up by four rupees, i. e from Rs 32 to Rs 36 per kilogram. The same incident again happened while a female member of the team was talking to some women, a person came in and reported the increase in flour prices.

The team noticed that the news was almost like an electric shock for the villagers. This is no wonder. If the average earning for one person is Rs 6, 500, and on average only one person is able to find work in the city this would be a tremendous increase in wheat price. At least three to four kilograms of flour is consumed daily by a family of 6- 7 in the rural environment. (Generally, they have another food item but in meager quantity (such as a gravy-based dish or potatoes) and hence hunger is basically staved off with eating more roti than other healthier helpings of vegetables. Meat of course is almost unheard of in villages, especially in Sindh. )

**Of Collusions and Collaborations:  
A Case of Land Grab in Sindh, Pakistan**



Al Dahra Rhodes grass field in village Syed Ali Nawaz Shah

So on the average they would spend Rs 100- 130 daily only for purchasing flour. If the price would have gone up by Rs 4, the average increase in cost would be about Rs 480 per month. If the total house holds income is Rs 6, 500 then such an increase in the price of wheat is almost tragic. This was also gauged by the responses from the people. On being asked how they managed, a person responded that if they had been able to get work on that day, they would bring home five kilogram of flour, otherwise make do with two kilograms. Another woman had remarked, “if there is food available we eat, otherwise make do without; what else can we do?”

These marginalized communities have to hard work just for their daily survival. During wheat cultivation season people have to go to other land lords’ land for wheat harvesting and get three maunds for harvesting one acre of land. It is indeed ironic that rural population are primarily responsible for the country’s food production

but they cannot feed their families: certainly a boon of imperialist agro- chemical p policies.

A focus group of woman yielded the information that they have reduced their livestock due to scarcity of grass in the area. Women in the focus group mentioned that previously they would keep half the milk from their animals for household consumption and sell half in the market to earn some money for other household expenses. But this situation has stopped after the land grab. According to a woman, her son had tried to cut the grass being grown on the Al Dahra leased land. They put her son in the police lock up and it became very difficult to get him released. After that, the villagers have reduced their livestock and ensure that they do not access grass from there. As the woman put it “her children were dearer to her than the livestock and naturally under the circumstances they have to protect their children.”

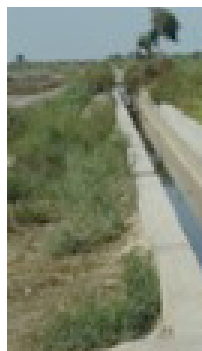
**Impacts on water**

People living at the tail end areas face immense water shortage because of massive water theft by Al Dahra land in the front areas of the water channel. There is water shortage on adjacent lands also. A focus group informant said that due to water shortage, 3- 4 hundred acres of land of Choudhry family has also become barren and they have to survive on jobs at the poultry farms in the city.

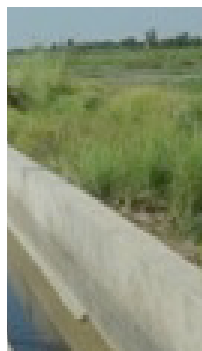
Al Dahra has installed a heavy water sucking machine which sucks water from the water channels creating water shortage in adjacent lands. A woman said that



Heavy water lifter pumping machine of Al Dahra in village Sayed Khadim Ali Shah



Al Dahra concrete water course in village Sayed Ali N



water course in village Sayed Ali N



New water channel sanctioned from Irrigation Department of Sindh for Al Dahra Grass fields

due to water shortage in the area grass production in adjacent lands is also declining. The irrigation authorities release some water after 15 days.

As has been reported before an additional government water channel has been added in the past year. No doubt the diversion of government resources toward Al Dahra operations are due to the Sindh Agricultural Minister's bureaucratic power. It is the same power which is keeping not only the villagers quite but also other smaller land holding families.

## **Rural development**

During the research team's visit to area vast land was being used for Rhodes grass was grown in four villages namely Syed Ali Nawaz Shah, Khaskhaili, Jumoo Machi and Syed Khadim Ali Shah.

Village Sayed Ali Nawaz Shah consisted of more than 200 houses of Meghwar and Kolhi community (Hindu sub-castes). Houses were made up of mud and straws, many of them were built with bricks and concrete material but had poor drainage, health, and education facilities. A small school constructed by an NGO was seen in the village.

Village Sayed Khadim Ali Shah is on the main road connecting Mirpurkhas city. It is divided by a water course – called water course<sup>15</sup>. Meghwar community is on the left of the water course, on the right there are houses that belong to Syed land lords and Kumbhar community, and at the back of the village there are about 30 – 40 houses of Bheel community. In this village a girl's middle school, an animal hospital,

boy's middle school and a basic health unit was also constructed but not functioning.

After the heavy rainfall 2011 and resulting damage and destruction in Mirpur Khas different NGOs like ACTED, Save the Children, UNICEF and World Food Program started relief and rehabilitation work and provided temporary shelters, pit latrines, flour and food, hand pumps and huts. A local person informed that ACTED Pakistan has provided RS. 2100 for the construction of hut and some construction material like (bamboos, *patar* straw roof and plastic). A person enthusiastically said: 'we received 12 kg wheat flour three times due to influence of Syed Ali Nawaz Shah'.

In fear of displacement a woman from focus group said that 'we cannot dare speak for our rights, suppose if we ask them and they pull out us from our homes where do we poor people go? She said, we do not have enough to settle in city or get any home on rent. The contrast in the homes of the villagers and that of the Minister needs no comparison.

Livestock and houses of Meghwar communities, material of new constructed house is donated by an NGO, as communities houses were destroyed during heavy rains and floods in 2011

## **Displacement**

An informant in focus group disclosed that many families have migrated to Tando Adam, Tando Allah Yar Samaro and Dighri cities in search of livelihood. 'We also feared to lose our homes; it may be possible



Livestock and houses of Meghwar communities, material of new constructed house is donated by an NGO, as communities houses were destroyed during heavy rains and floods in 2011

## Of Collusions and Collaborations: A Case of Land Grab in Sindh, Pakistan

that our village land could be confiscated by those land lords than we could not do anything. The land lords can do that for the greed of money’.

Citing example of landlessness, a villager said that there was a village of our Meghwar community on the opposite side of the road beside the Laghari Petrol Pump station which has been evacuated forcefully as the land has been marked for residential development. A villager reported that 100 – 150 families of Meghwar and Kolhi communities have shifted after the land was leased to Al Dahra. Another person mentioned that some of their members were moved to another community in the vicinity as the land on which they had their homes was given to Al Dahra.

### Impacts on women

Women usually went for cotton picking and also work in the fields. They were especially for harvesting of a number of crops including chilis, brinjal, onions as well as other work. A focus group woman said that they earn only Rs. 100 for onion sowing and Rs. 200 for working in cotton fields from 7- 8 am to 5 pm. However, they got Rs. 250 per maund for cotton picking but were hardly able to pick 10 to 20 kg per day. They were able to earn get Rs. 70 for a complete process of onion harvesting, cutting off the leaves on the top of the onions and than putting the onions in a bag of 100 kilogram.

In another focus group a woman narrated a story of exploitation of Syed family. She said once community



Destroyed houses of Kolhi communities from the leased land by Al Dahra in village Sayed Ali Nawaz Shah

women ploughed chilies in the fields of Syed Ali Nawaz Shah for three days but they were not paid for their wages. All of those women workers work in the fields of Syed Khadim Ali Shah, Qutab Ali Shah and other adjacent lands in the past; however now there was no work. A Muslim woman o narrated the story of past exploitations by *munshis*; according to her, women who were from sharecroppers families were not paid cotton picking wages. The *munshi* would deduct their cotton picking wage labor against expenses incurred for procuring fertilizers and pesticides.

One of the woman said that there are more than 10 family members dependent on just one working family member. However, now they after land had been leased to Al Dahra, they found that they were unable to find work as cotton pickers. According to them, the Kohli women were going to fields which were away from their village. But the Muslim women had no contacts such that they could also avail cotton picking opportunities. Kohlis were able to find work and they even had transport coming to pick them up but the Muslim women did not know how to go about finding similar work. Therefore, they felt their household circumstance was very difficult as they were totally dependent on their male workers.

They felt that they could not complain to anybody. When the Minister came, there would be many people with him and he was not willing to meet with the villagers. According to another woman, ‘whom can we complain, daughter of Qutab Ali Shah is living in Karachi who never comes here’.

### Impact on environment

There was massive use of fertilizers to produce grass on land leased by Al Dahra. According to the workers, on the average four bags of urea were used per acre in a month and about 12, 800 bags of urea were used on 3,200 acres per season. Locals were, however, unaware of environmental impacts of fertilizer use. There was no use of pesticides.

### Resistance

Speaking of resistance a motor mechanic responded ‘how can we resist against land given to Al Dahra as our community people stopped working on lands 2 –



3 years before the coming of Al Dahra'. Suppose, if we put our objection to the landlord Syed Ali Nawaz Shah for contracting his land with company; then surely he would ask us 'can you pay the amount of lease which Arabs are paying?' 'Honestly speaking, we are very thankful to Syed family for giving us some portion of land for our, homes. Another, goodness is that, nobody can displace us from here, we are living in a safe and secure environment', said an old man during focus group discussion.

Focus group informants have repeatedly emphasized that they were not facing any trouble from their *guardian* Sayed Ali Nawaz Shah . They said whatever work was assigned to them they would comply as was their guardian.

Miseries for minorities are increasing in Sindh especially for Hindu communities. They are highly insecure that is why they have they are in the habit of compromising with their circumstances. Talking about resistance, a laborer said that they could not ask Al Dahra to evacuate the land because they fear displacement. A villager commented that their community votes for Syed Khadim Ali Shah and we have about 250 votes. According to him they will never cast their vote for any other candidate. Again he talked about protection from Sayed Ali Nawaz Shah and his kindness in providing electricity, school, and hospitals.

## **Conclusion**

Neoliberalism in agriculture has brought immense price hike in the cost of production. In addition, there is continuous increase in mechanization which is leading to ever increasing loss of livelihood. The elite have been

increasing their wealth: and if this wealth is further cemented through feudal power's combining with bureaucratic political power the combination becomes very difficult to be breached by the poor.

The collusion of local political powers and imperialist capitalist class can be seen very clearly from the above case study of land grab in Mirpurkhas, Sindh. That displacement is huge for rural communities even before land grab means that now the situation is precarious and close to severe hunger amongst the very poor. Religious minorities are even more vulnerable. This was often seen during the focus groups. The Muslim communities were willing to speak where as the Hindus were only willing to say good things about their land lord. The extremely high cost of living in urban areas is well known to villagers.

In rural areas at least they do not have to pay rent for residential quarters. Utility and water bills are not a monthly reality. They are well aware that if they 'do take up arms' and organize themselves they and their family members will face certainly face eviction if not being pushed into charges for criminal activity.

It is the fear of the known that stops them from standing up and putting up a resistance against the many atrocities that they face on an hourly basis. The fear of the unknown is also there. Many have no skills which they could employ in a city. Secondly, they know that the cost of living would be beyond their means in an urban environment.

However, there is no doubt that the only means of bringing back dignity to the lives of these marginalized communities is to ensure an organized movement of small and landless farmers.

## **Annexure I**

### **Corporate Agriculture Farming (CAF) incentives and policy guidelines**

#### **Investment Policy for Corporate Agriculture Farming**

1. Only such local and foreign companies will be entitled to Corporate Agriculture Farming that are incorporated in Pakistan under the Companies Ordinance, 1984.
2. There is no upper ceiling limit on land holding for CAF by amending relevant laws. The size of the proposed corporate farm may be left to be determined by the prospective investor.
3. Agriculture Income Tax, regime applicable in provinces, on income from agriculture, would be applicable to Corporate Agriculture Farming.
4. Tax relief in shape of Initial Depreciation Allowance @ 50 % of machinery cost is allowed to set –off provincial AIT.
5. Labor laws may not be presently applicable to Corporate Agriculture Companies. Due to special circumstances of the agriculture sector however appropriate labor laws be developed for this sector within five year.
6. Import of agriculture machinery and equipment is exempted from Custom duty and Sales Tax.
7. Machinery items for wheat/ grain storage and cool chain are importable at Import duty @ 0 %.
8. Wherever possible, state land may either be sold or leased to the investors for 50 years, extendable for another 49 years. Preference in this respect will be given to cultivatable wastelands, which is otherwise fit for cultivation.
9. Transfer of land for CAF will be exempted from duty.
10. 100% foreign equity is allowed. ( in the CAF )
11. No Government sanction required undertaking CAF except registration with BOI.
12. Exemption of the dividends (of CAF companies) from tax.

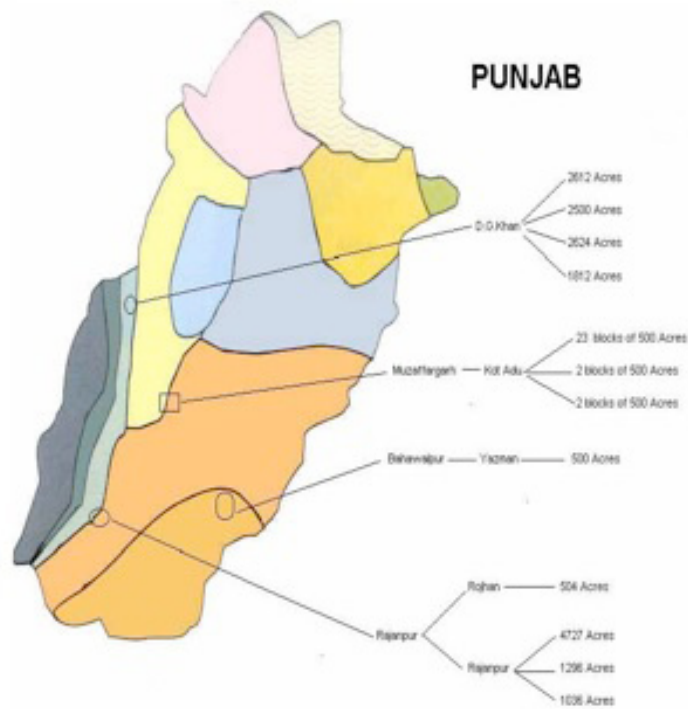
#### **The areas of Investment for Corporate Agriculture Farming (CAF)**

1. Land development/ reclamation of barren land, desert and hilly areas for agriculture purpose and crop farming.
2. Reclamation of water Front Areas / Creeks.
3. Crops, Fruits, Vegetables, Flower Farming / Integrated Agriculture (cultivation and processing of crops)
4. Modernization and Development of irrigation facilities and water management.
5. Plantation / Forestry.
6. Dairy, small ruminants (sheep, goat) and other livestock farming.

## Annexure II

### Punjab Land Availability Position

District	Tehsil	Revenue Estate	Area available
Muzaffargarh	Kot Adu	<b>Sadiqabad</b>	23 blocks of 500 acres
-do-	-do-	Azizabad	2 blocks of 500 acres
-do-	-do-	Mustafabad	2 blocks of 500 acres
<i>Rajanpur</i>	<i>Rajanpur</i>	Asni	i) 2,647 acres ii) 2,080 acres
-do-	-do-	Patti Kalan Miran Khas	1,296 acres
-do-	-do-	Rakh Machka Pacca	1,036 acres
-do-	<i>Rojhan</i>	Rakh Kotla Hassan	504 acres
<i>Bahawalpur</i>	<i>Yazman</i>	Chak NO. 96/DB	500 acres
<i>D.G. Khan</i>	<i>D.G. Khan</i>	Shadan Lund Chak Ladan	2,612 acres
-do-	-do-	Dalana Patti Tomi	2,500 acres
-do-	-do-	Dalana Patti Bhuchery	i) 1,412 acres ii) 1,212 acres
-do-	-do-	Gazzi	1,812 acres
Total: -	<b>31,111 acres</b>		

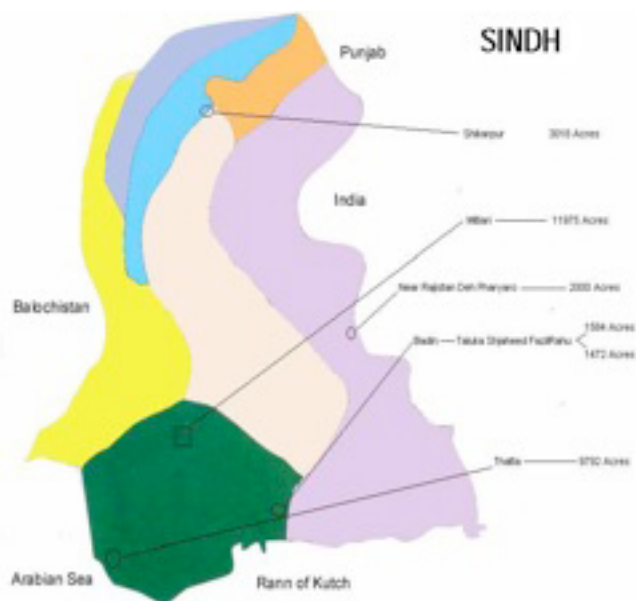


Source: <http://www.pakboi.gov.pk/pdf/Agriculture%20overview.pdf>

## Annexure III

### Sindh Land Availability Position

Area	Location	Kind of land	Availability of water	Lease period proposed	Annual lease rate proposed
<b>REVENUE DEPARTMENT</b>					
2,000-00 acres (Sukkur Barrage)	Deh Pharyaro Taluka Nara	Cultivable	Under ground water is kalarish at 100 ft. depth	30 years renewable by 20 years more	Rs. 1,000/- per acres plus 20% annual increase
1,584 Acres (Kotri Barrage)	B Nos. 1158 to 1256 Deh Ahmed Rajo No.3 Taluka Shaheed Fazil Rahu, Distt.Badin.	Cultivable	Under ground water is kalarish	30 years renewable by 20 years more	Rs.1,000/- per acres plus 20% annual increase.
1,472 Acres (Kotri Barrage)	B.Nos. 2173 to 2218 & 2287 to 2332. Deh Ahmed Rajo No. 6 Taluka Shaheed Fazil Rahu Distt. Badin.	Cultivable	Barrage water can be made from Girhari Distry which is at the distance of 5 miles.	30 years renewable by 20 years more	Rs.1,000/- per acres plus 20% annual increase.
<b>Total: 3,056-00</b>					
<b>FOREST DEPARTMENT</b>					
11,975 Acres	Matiari Riverine Forest (Distance 25 K.M. from Hyderabad along National Highway near Matiari Town.	Cultivable	Water lifting from River or through Tubewells	Can be leased out for longer period (To be negotiated)	On agreed rate of joint venture.
9,792 Acres.	Riverine forest situated in distt. Thatta (50 K.M. from Hyderabad and Thatta both).	Cultivable	Lifting from Indus River or from Sapa Irrigation mince pass	Can be leased out for longer period (To be negotiated)	On agreed rate of joint venture.
<b>Total: 21,767-00</b>					
<b>AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT</b>					
3,018 Acres	Farm at Lodhna in Distt. Shikarpur	Cultivable	Water is available	Permanent joint venture	1,00,000 per acres (Cost)
<b>Grant total of available land. 29,841-00 Acres</b>					

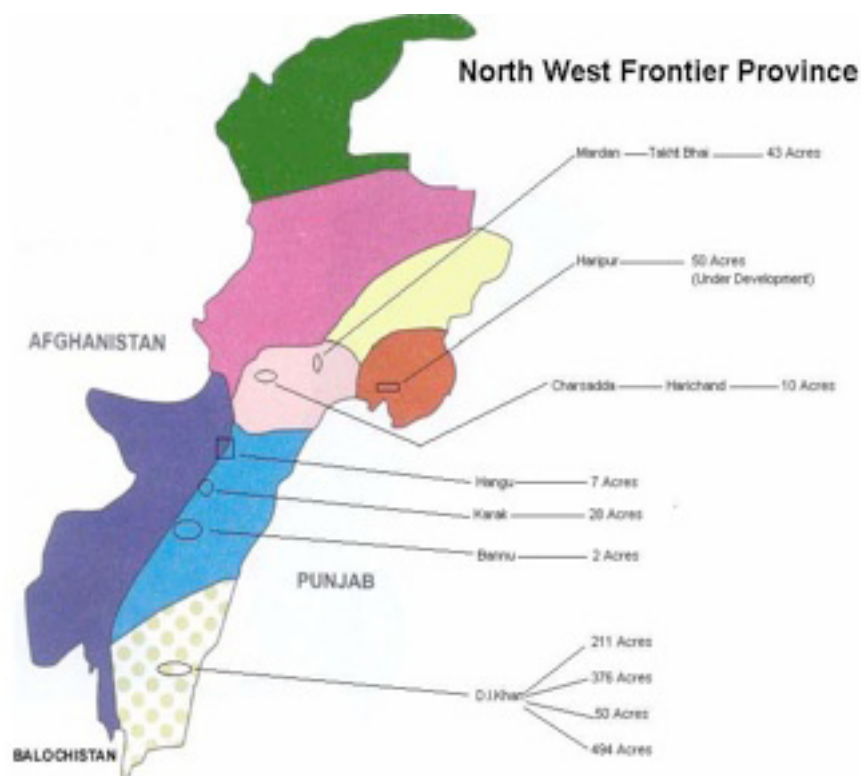


Source <http://www.pakboi.gov.pk/pdf/Agriculture%20overview.pdf>

## Annexure IV

### North West Frontier Province Land Availability Position

S.#	Name of Seed Farm	Location	Total Area (Acres)	Cultivated area (acres)
1.	Govt. Seed Farm, Rakh Manghan	D.I. Khan	884	673
2.	Govt. Seed Farm, Rakh Zandani	D.I. Khan	1,133	757
3.	Govt. Seed Farm, Ratta Kulachi	D.I. Khan	500	450
4.	Govt. Seed Farm, Rakh Band Kural	D.I. Khan	994	500
5.	Govt. Seed Farm, Nar Hafiz Abad, Serai Naurang	Bannu	62	60
6.	Govt. Barani Farm	Hangu	47	40
7.	Govt. Seed Farm, Bahadur Khel	Karak	84	56
8.	Govt. Seed Farms, Jamra	Takht Bhai, Mardan	120	77
9.	Govt. Sugarcane Multiplication Farm	Harichand, Charsadda	75	65
10.	Govt. Seed-Cum Demonstration Farm	Haripur	50	Under Development
<b>Total:</b>			<b>3,949</b>	<b>2,678</b>



Source: <http://www.pakboi.gov.pk/pdf/Agriculture%20overview.pdf>

## Annexure V

### Balochistan Land Availability Position

	Tehsil panni		Recreation Centers, Establishment of IT Parks, Industrial Estates, Fisheries Development.
	Tehsil Ormara		

#### Agriculture farms in Balochistan for Public Private Partnership

S.No	Name of Farm	Area in Acres	Location, District
1.	A.D.I	1,185	Khangur, Naseerabad
2.	Seed Farm Gidder	1,469	Surab, Kalat
3.	Seed Farm Gidder	3,519	Gadahwa, Jhal Magsi
4.	Coconut farm	200	Uthal, Lasbela
5.	Seed Farm	273	Usta Mohammad, Naseerabad
6.	Katvi Farm	400	Katvi, Loral
7.	Sariab Farm	280	Mastung, Mastung
8.	Model Farm	480	Gulu Shehar, Sibi
9.	Kalu Killa Farm	200	Kalu Killa, Killa Saifullah
10.	Agriculture Research Sub Station	400	Turbat, Turbat
11.	Agriculture Research Fruit Experiment Station Wayaro Farm	166	Wayaro, Lasbela

