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# New geographies of agricultural production in Morocco

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## Résumé

Triggered by the 2007/08 food crisis – which entailed massive spikes in commodity prices and difficulties in accessing food on the global market – food import dependent countries within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) reoriented their national food security strategies. These are shifting towards agro-security mercantilism, where nations secure direct access to foreign agricultural land and its associated production, rather than relying on market mechanisms to purchase food. Around 40% of investments originating from the GCC target countries in the MENA region, with countries such as Morocco actively seeking foreign direct investment to boost their agricultural development. In Morocco, following decades of reduced governmental involvement in the agricultural sector (between 1985 and 2008), the development and adoption of the Plan Marco Vert (PMV) in 2008 aimed to reinforce the agricultural sector and the role of the government in it. The 15-year vision of the PMV presents an ideal platform for investments in the agricultural sector to take place while being supported by governmental subsidies. In a global climate of increased concerns about the environment, the PMV divided its actions in two groups: the first pillar entails the development of a capitalist-oriented agricultural production based on an extensive yet ecological approach to land and resources. And the second pillar, defined by family farming, targets an amelioration of farming techniques and practices, and aims to increase production levels and efficiency. While developing a sustainable agriculture and protecting the environment and the natural resources are identified as key objectives of agri-business companies from the GCC, little is known about the state and progress of many of these investments or the means they use to attain their objectives. In this paper, I focus on agri-food investments from companies from the GCC in Morocco, in order to analyse their activities at the nexus between environmental concerns, agricultural development, and making a profit. In an effort to describe and discuss current agrarian dynamics and their environmental impacts in Morocco, I ask: What are the mechanism at play that are allowing for "environmentally conscious" agricultural investments to emerge? How are environmental and agrarian policies interacting with companies values and expectations? After discussing the convergences and intersections between environmental and agrarian policies in Morocco, I take on the challenge of studying a few selected cases studies from companies from the GCC in Morocco. Via an analysis of their objectives, activities, and investments within the first pillar, I explain their perception of sustainable agriculture and environmental protection, and demonstrate how the future visions for farming and sustainability are deeply contradictory. I aim to illustrate how changes in the agrarian landscape is intimately linked to an increasing relationship and importance of capital in the agricultural sector. I argue that new geographies of agricultural production are rewriting the agrarian history of Morocco, where capital and finance override environmental concerns.

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**Mots-Clés:** Environmental and agrarian policies, Sustainable agriculture, Plan Maroc Vert, GCC agricultural investment, Capital