



The state and the farmers: the dichotomy of land policy in Uzbekistan

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Outline

- I. General motivation
- II. Cooperative policy in Uzbekistan.
- III. Land tenure (in)security in Uzbekistan
- IV. Land governmentality in Uzbekistan
- V. Conclusion

I. General Motivation

- Uzbekistan is a developing country in transition since 1991.
- Government is the primary agent of change.
- Agricultural land is a state property, farmers can lease land for up to 50 years.
- Failure of decentralization policies in water and land governance (Veldwisch et al., 2013).
- The government of Uzbekistan is in the process of ongoing search for the optimal organizational form of agricultural enterprise (Zorya et al., 2019).
- Insecure and ambiguous land rights (Zorya, et al., 2019; Akhmadiyeva et al., 2021);

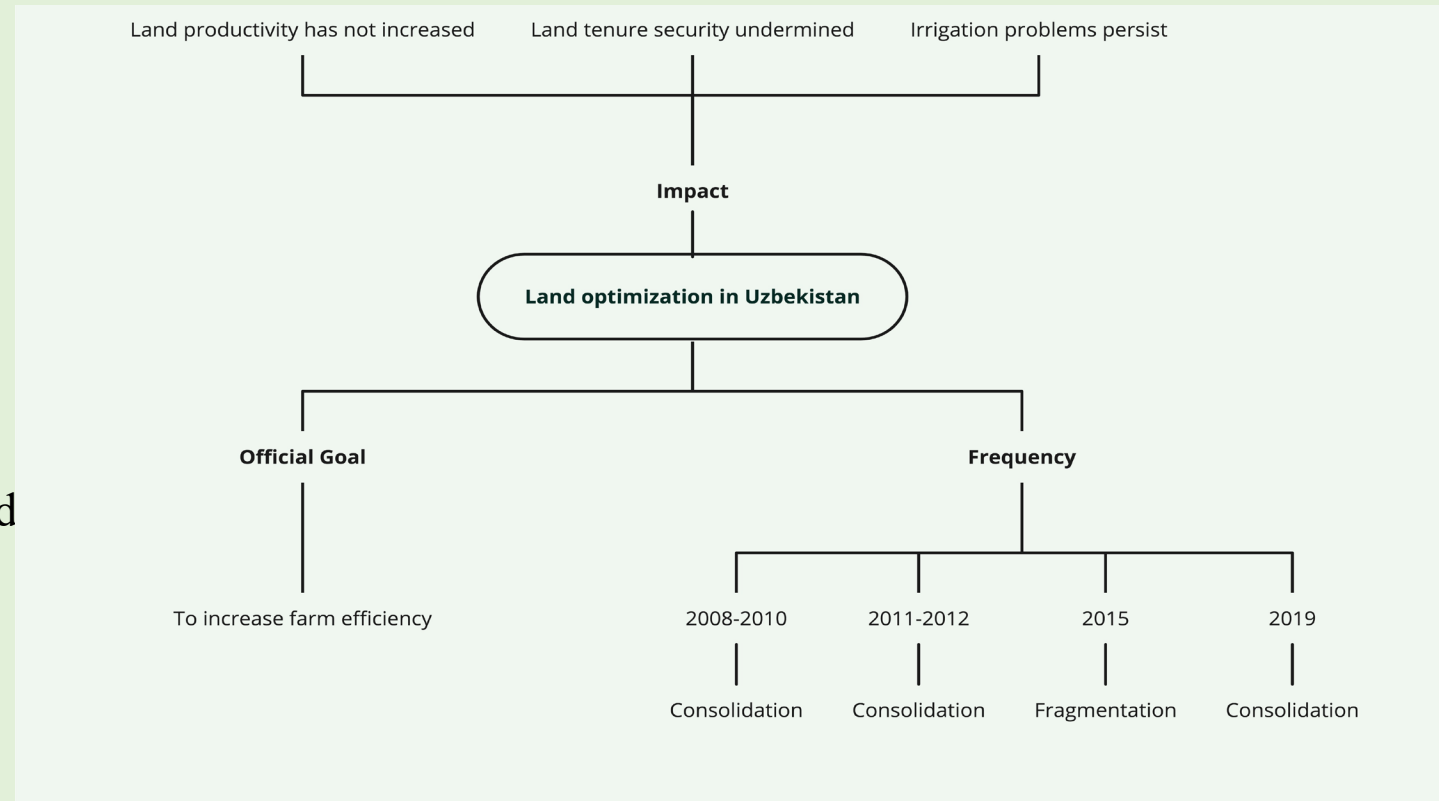


Figure 1: Land optimization reforms, 2008-2019

Source: adapted from Djanibekov *et al.* (2012), Zorya *et al.* (2019)

II. Cooperative policy in Uzbekistan (1): study overview

- **Focus of the study:** Decree of the President of Uzbekistan #4239 from 14.03.2019 "On the measures for the development of agricultural cooperation in the horticulture".
- **Research objective:** Study the policy implementation and assess its compatibility with relevant institutions.
- **Methodology:** Case study, in-depth interviews, desk research.
- **Theoretical framework:** Procedure for Institutional Compatibility Assessment (Schleyer et al., 2007).
- **Study locations:** cooperatives in Samarkand province and Tashkent Province.
- **Respondents:** total - 22, including farmers – 11, chairperson of cooperative – 6, representatives of authorities – 2, international experts – 3.
- **Period:** June – September 2019

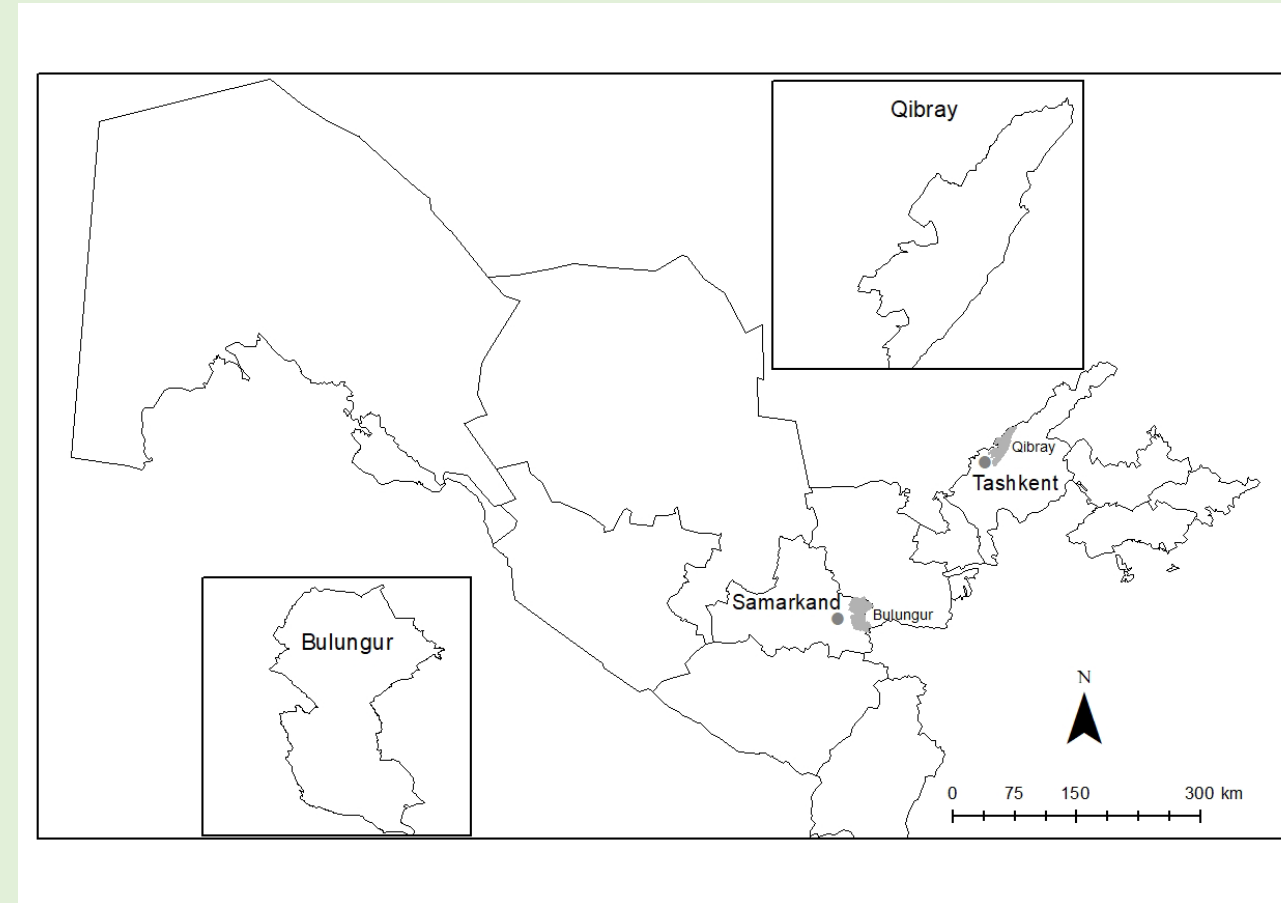


Figure 2: Study sites in Uzbekistan

II. Cooperative policy in Uzbekistan (2): findings

Table 1: Comparison of cooperative policy goals and enforcement results

| Policy aspect | As per Decree (2019) | Results |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Establishment of cooperatives</i> | Self-organization by farmers | Top-down quick establishment in selected locations. Farmers lacked information on policy. |
| <i>Type of cooperative</i> | Service | Producer |
| <i>Membership</i> | Voluntary membership | Enforced membership, farmers were indifferent to membership terms. |
| <i>Crop choice</i> | Freedom to choose crops | Crop choice is still subject to crop allocation plan |
| <i>Land property rights</i> | Protection of land from land reallocation and expropriation. | Land tenure insecurity remains. Farmers perceived this aspect as the least important for joining a cooperative. |
| <i>Number of Cooperatives</i> | | 41 in total, as of the end of 2019 |

Source: Niyazmetov et al., 2021



III. Land tenure (in)security (1): study overview

- **Focus of the study:** Land reallocation/optimization in Uzbekistan.
- **Research objective:** to understand whether and to what extent farmers have normalized insecurity of land tenure under state-driven land policies.
- **Methodology:** Farm survey, discrete choice experiment (land contract), logit models.
- **Theoretical framework:** concept of land tenure security: legal, de-facto, perceived (van Gelder, 2010).
- **Study locations:** Bulungur district (Samarkand province) and Qibray district (Tashkent Province).
- **Respondents:** farmers – 153
- **Period:** February – June 2021

III. Land tenure (in)security (2): discrete choice experiment

Table 2: Example of a choice task

| | Contract 1 | Contract 2 |
|---|--|--|
| Land contract duration | 30 years | 10 years |
| Crop choice rights | You are free to decide which crops to grow. | You are obliged to grow mandatory crops on 50% of your cropland. |
| Land contract security | Your land is protected from eventual land optimization and expropriation before the expiration of the contract. | Your land is not protected from eventual land optimization and expropriation before the expiration of the contract. |
| Annual rental payment for a land contract (UZS) | 3 mln. per ha, total for 10 ha = 30 mln. | 1 mln. per ha, total for 10 ha = 10 mln. |



III. Land tenure (in)security (3): findings

- Legal security: land contracts are subject to premature termination due to state policies.
- De-facto security: **93%** of respondents experienced land reallocation.
- Perceived security:
 - **32%** - perceive that their land contracts will likely be terminated in the next 5 years
 - **40%** - worry about losing land in the next 5 years.
 - **88%** - do not perceive land tenure insecurity as a normal phenomenon.
- Farmers value crop choice rights and are willing to pay much more for a secure land contract.
- Farmers in Qibray prioritize land contract security and the ability to exercise full crop choice rights more than their counterparts in Bulungur.



IV. Land governmentality (1): study overview

- **Focus of the study:** Land policy in Uzbekistan.
- **Research objective:** to understand how the state directs the conduct of land users (farmers) through land policy to make them governable.
- **Methodology:** Case study, in-depth interviews, desk research.
- **Theoretical framework:** concept of *governmentality* by M. Foucault (Senellart et al., 2009; Dean, 2010)
- **Study locations:** Bulungur district (Samarkand province) and Qibray district (Tashkent Province).
- **Respondents:** total – 17, including:
representatives of authorities – 12, international and national experts – 3, farmers – 2.
- **Period:** April – May 2022.

IV. Land governmentality (2): findings (preliminary)

Table 3: Land policies in Uzbekistan, 2002-2019.

| # | Land policy, years | Visibility | Techné | Episteme | Identities |
|---|------------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| 1 | Land fragmentation, 2002-2006 | Dismantling of large collective farms (shirkats) and allocation of land among individual farms (farmers). | Top-down approach. Lack of prior consultations with farmers. Lack of prior public discussions. | Inefficient large-scale collective farming. Absence of a responsible “owner of the land”. | Farmer as a responsible owner of the land. The state as a supporter of farmers. |
| 2 | Land consolidation, 2008-12 | Farmland size increases by merging land of farmers. | | Economies of scale. Controlling issues. | The state as a sole decision-maker and visionary for the agriculture. |
| 3 | Land fragmentation, 2015-2016 | Farmland size decreases. | | Incapacity of farmers to manage large farmlands. | |
| 4 | Land consolidation, 2019 | Farmland size increases via merging land of farmers. | | Increased area of high value crops, multi-profile farms. | Farmers are expected to follow orders to fulfil state goals. |
| 5 | Cluster policy, 2018 – present. | Cluster as a new agricultural entity. | | Value chain increase, agricultural output growth, economies of scale. | State delegates the control of farmers to clusters and retain the control of clusters. |



V. Conclusion

- The state's main objective is to control land users through proposed reforms, prioritizing it over official goals.
- The legal status of land users, (tenants, farmers, cooperative members, or others) is irrelevant.
- The state's control over farmers is a guiding principle and characterizes the *governmentality* in the agriculture of Uzbekistan.
- This *governmentality* is incompatible with the official goals of prior and current land policies in Uzbekistan.
- In the end, there is a dichotomy between the state and the farmers.



Thank you for your attention!