

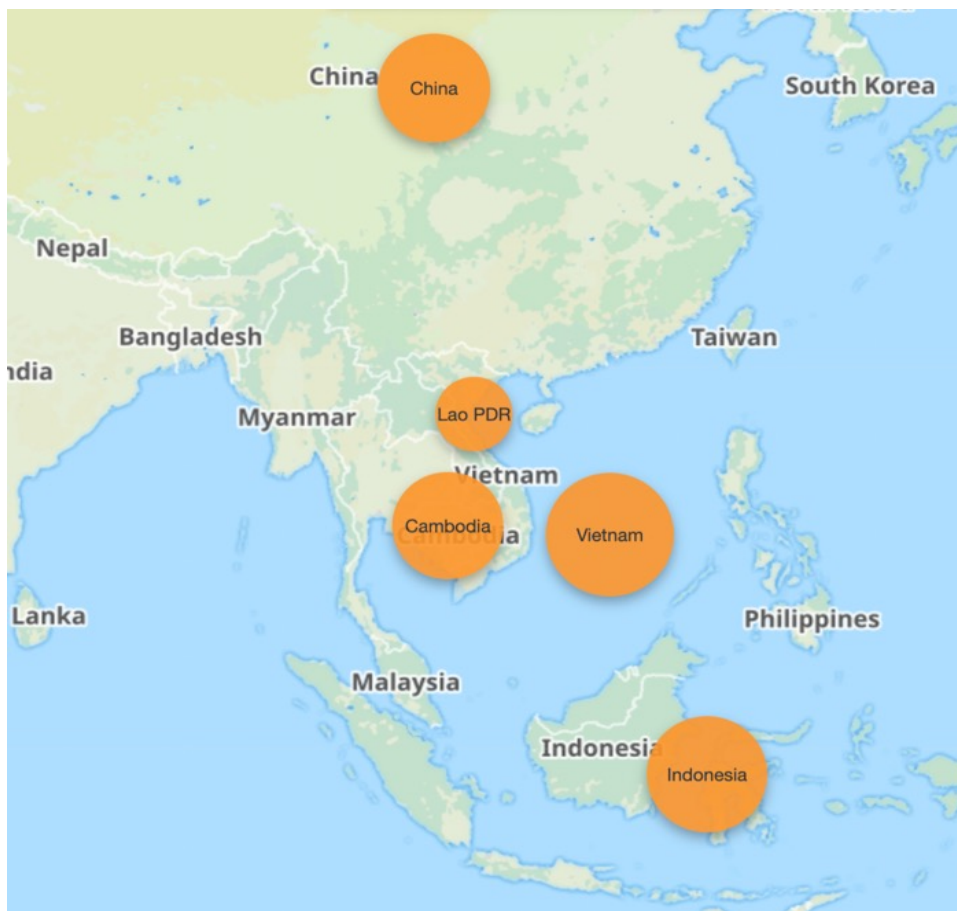


# Large-scale land acquisitions in forests in Asia 2022

---

**SNAPSHOT**

This snapshot presents data on forestry-related large-scale land acquisitions (LSLAs) in Asia. An LSLA is defined as an acquisition of land that is larger than 200 hectares (ha) or double the median land holding, as specified by the national context, through a transfer of land ownership and/or the rights to use and control land by sale, lease, or concession. The Land Matrix database covers five major classifications of forestry-related LSLAs: (1) timber plantation (for wood and fibre); (2) forest logging/management (for wood and fibre); (3) carbon sequestration; (4) conservation; and (5) unspecified forest activities.



**Figure 1.** Distribution of recorded forestry-related deals in Asia as of April 2022

Landlessness and lack of secure access to and tenure over land, water, and forest resources have been identified as one of the priority issues by many farmer organisations in Asia. As this continues to be a major problem for small-scale farmers, LSLAs have become a serious threat to their livelihoods. LSLAs are often shrouded in mystery, which can allow powerful officials, companies, and individuals to enrich themselves at the expense of the local population, including families of farmers, fishers, forest users and dwellers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, and herders.

The data in this snapshot was downloaded in April 2022 from the Land Matrix Initiative open access platform ([www.landmatrix.org](http://www.landmatrix.org)). The Land Matrix is an independent global land monitoring initiative, which promotes transparency and accountability over land and investments, focusing primarily on LSLAs in agriculture where there is foreign involvement in low- and middle-income countries. Although dynamic and constantly evolving, the data provides a springboard for stimulating data exchange and continuous improvement of the database, as well as encouraging discussions on the impact LSLAs have on people-centred land governance and food security.

The Land Matrix database has recorded 1,009 LSLAs in Asia,<sup>1</sup> of which 4%, or 40 deals, are intended for forest-related investment covering 1,100,445 hectares of land. The map (Figure 1) shows a glimpse of the distribution of these acquisitions throughout the region, with most concentrated in Southeast Asia. Cambodia and Vietnam alone are home to 24 deals, covering 432,290 hectares of land.

**Table 1.** Top three countries with highest number of forestry deals (as of April 2022)

Country	Number of deals*	Total deal size (in ha)**
1 Cambodia	14	136,783
2 Vietnam	10	295,587
3 China	8	161,526

\*52% of these are domestic deals

\*\*67% of the total area is covered by domestic deals

Investors mostly came from Cambodia, China, and Vietnam (Table 2). The top investor for forestry deals in terms of size is the MEDCO Group, based in Indonesia, with a total land acquisition of 301,600 (Table 3).

**Table 2.** Top three investor countries (as of April 2022)

Country	Number of deals	Total deal size (in ha)
1 Cambodia	14	136,783
2 China	12	164,039
3 Vietnam	10	435,887

**Table 3.** Top three investor companies/entities (as of April 2022)

Investors	Number of deals	Total deal size (in ha)
1 MEDCO Group	4	301,600
2 Sinar Mas Group	12	256,000
3 China Forestry Holdings Company	10	143,000

The majority of acquisitions are for timber plantations for acacia, teak, eucalyptus, and miscellaneous trees, usually used for paper, furniture, and construction materials (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Types of crops found in forestry deals in Asia (as of April 2022)

<sup>1</sup> Filters used: 1) 200 ha or more; 2) concluded deals only; 3) excludes contract farming and forest concessions; 4) year of initiation is 2000 and up.



These deals have considerable impact on local communities. For instance, the LSLA operated by PT Selaras Inti Semesta (deal #3509) is a timber plantation area planted with industrial monoculture trees such as acacia and eucalyptus. The project, named Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate, proceeded despite limited community consultations, unjust compensation for the land, and broken promises of jobs, housing, support for education, electricity, and clean water. While the company is reaping profits, the community is losing land, livelihoods, traditions, and health. Community members opposing the deal continue to deal with threats and harassments from the company's security forces, too.





**It is critical to gather and record information on these deals in order to raise awareness about the impacts of LSLAs at the local and national level, and to lobby for comprehensive land reform that facilitates access to and tenure over land, water, and forest resources for local communities, including farmers, fishers, forest users and dwellers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, and herders.**

The Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) is a regional family farming organisation, which currently has 22 member organisations in 16 countries, representing a total membership of 13 million small-scale women and men farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, forest users and dwellers, pastoralists, and herders. As the Land Matrix Asia Regional Focal Point, AFA aims to increase the involvement of local, national, and regional stakeholders to contribute to improved land governance through data collection. To find out more about LSLAs in Asia, visit our website at [www.landmatrix.org/region/asia](http://www.landmatrix.org/region/asia).

Information on the database regarding LSLAs is not complete. If you would like to report an LSLA in your area or to get involved in this initiative, please connect with us through the channels below:


[www.facebook.com/AsianFarmers](http://www.facebook.com/AsianFarmers)  

[@AsianFarmers](https://twitter.com/AsianFarmers)


[@asianfarmers.afa](https://www.instagram.com/asianfarmers.afa)  

[afa@asianfarmers.org](mailto:afa@asianfarmers.org)