

Learning by Ear

Globalization

Cameroon: Contract Farming

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Globalization – Cameroon: Contract Farming

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3 Voices:

- young speaker 1 (male)
- young speaker (female „the big sister“)
- speaker 2 - as Off-Voice for the feature

Clips: **3 Männer**

2 adult men (CDC + unionist)

1 young man (farmer)

Opening LbE

Part 1 - Feature

Female speaker 1:

Hello [Male speaker]! Hello everybody!

Male speaker 1:

Today in our globalization series, we're going to talk about contract farming.

Female speaker 1:

About farmers, who sign contracts with big multinational corporations.

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1. SFX

Male speaker 1:

And we're heading for Limbé and Tiko, two villages southwest of Douala, the capital of Cameroon....

Female speaker 1:

Two villages where contract farming is common practice...

Male speaker 1+Female speaker 1:

So fasten your seatbelts and let's get going!

-----**Script:** -----

1. Clip

Male speaker/Female speaker 2:

Mount Cameroon is 4090 meters high and overlooks the Atlantic Ocean. There are banana, palm oil and rubber plantations... here in Tiko the plantations go on and go on for ever. Many of the plantations at the foot of the mountain are run by the Cameroon Development Corporation, or CDC.

1. Clip

Male speaker/Female speaker 2:

Mayah Godfred Che receives us in his office in Limbé -- he's a statistician at the CDC.

2. CDC 1 (English)

"As far as CDC we have seven oil palm estates, we have two oil mills, we have a total of 11,729 hectares of mature area where we are investing now."

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Male speaker/Female speaker 2:

Farming is becoming more and more intensive. The landscape around Tiko is changing.

3. Clip

4. CDC 3 (English)

“People who planted their own plantations, they plant and they harvest their crop and they bring it for us to buy, who buy it in quantity of supply, who buy it in tonnes. They are very important because they boost our production.”

Male speaker/Female speaker 2:

The palm nuts harvested by small producers are crushed at the CDC’s oil factory. The CDC then exports the oil all over the world.

5. Clip

Male speaker/Female speaker 2:

The planters get a share of the profit, in the form of farm machinery for example. The other side of the coin, however, is that they are very dependent on the company. Let’s hear what Gabriel Mbene thinks. He is the president of the local farming union and the vice-president of the Union of the Free Trade Unions of Cameroon:

6. Union (English)

“Actually these smallholders, these small planters, who are called small farmers, who depend on very small production -- about one or two hectares -- they produce and certainly may not very easily have a market to sell and their lone market should be now these giant agro-industry companies like the CDC..”

Male speaker 1:

So basically there is an unequal balance of power between the company and small producers?

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Female speaker1:

Let's say that sometimes the relationship goes a bit sour – let's listen to Thomas's story.

7. Clip Nuts

"

+8. Thomas introduction

"My name is Nughewe Thomas. I used to plant palm oil fields but the CDC stopped us."

Male speaker/Female speaker 2:

Thomas receives us in his yard in Tiko. He no longer goes to the fields with the other villagers -- ever since his problems with the CDC bankrupted him.

8. Clip

Male speaker/Female speaker 2:

At the beginning, everything was fine. Like many farmers in the region, the young man signed a contract with the CDC. He agreed to sell all of his palm nut harvest to the company and the CDC guaranteed it would buy his harvest in return and provide him with new equipment.

9 Thomas payment

"The problem is that when I delivered they didn't pay me. Then I couldn't pay the people working in the fields. But they wanted to be paid when they left the fields in the evening - they wanted me to count what they had cut and give them the money."

The CDC took three months to pay Thomas the money. He took out loans so he could pay his ten employees. Then the farmer decided to sell his palm nuts to CDC's main competition -- Socapalm. The CDC saw this as a betrayal and confiscated the equipment it had put at his disposal. Thomas claimed the CDC employed thugs to steal his harvest one night. He said the company had threatened him. In any case, his brother who was his partner left the business.

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Male speaker 1 (whispers):

But what are Thomas and his former employees doing now?

Female speaker 1 (whispers):

Well, some of them are working for other employers but most are living in misery.

10. Thomas debts

"Today, times are hard, we're unemployed. Some women are crying, asking how the children will live? I can barely pay the rent. I'm a year in arrears and I can't pay."

"

Male speaker/Female speaker 2:

Thomas is likely to find it hard to find work again. But the farming unions are demanding that the big companies running the region's plantations allow farmers and villagers to profit too -- by building roads, for example, or subsidizing them so they can buy fertilizer and pay their workers.

Music bridge

Part 2: explanation part

Male speaker 1 and Female speaker 1:

Male speaker:

If I understand correctly, contract farming links farmers to the agro-food industry.

Female speaker:

Exactly. Big companies make deals with farmers and agree to buy their whole harvest. That way, the companies know they will have enough raw materials.

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Male speaker:

Does contract farming only exist in Africa?

Female speaker:

Not at all. It started out in the United States in the 1950s. Then it came to Europe where it developed with the food industry. There is also contract farming in Asia.

Male speaker:

But how do small independent producers who have a family business for instance actually sign contracts with big multinationals?

Female speaker:

There are lots of support programs run by NGOs or the FAO for instance.

Male speaker:

The FAO?

Female speaker:

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization. The FAO has a service called Agricultural Support Systems Division, which helps producers improve infrastructure and production techniques and enables them access to the international market so they can sell their products.

Male speaker:

Can farmers be forced to always cultivate the same thing?

Female speaker:

That's called "monoculture". It means small farmers are forced to abandon their food-producing crops, which are destined for the local population or the family.

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Male speaker:

Is there a form of agriculture which allows farmers to combine food-producing agriculture and industrial agriculture?

Female speaker:

It seems difficult -- the models are so different but it is true that a combination would be ideal.

Male speaker:

...so producers could eat enough and improve their working conditions by modernizing their production techniques...

Female speaker:

... so long as they take the environment into consideration so that land and natural resources are not depleted...

Credits

Male speaker/Female speaker 2 :

And that's all for today from us at Learning by Ear. Thank you for listening to this program about globalization and contract farming. A Deutsche Welle program produced by Henri Fotso and Sandrine Blanchard. To find out more or to listen to the program again, go to our website www.dw-world.de/lbe! Goodbye for now and don't forget to tune in next time!