

Preface

This book highlights the need for integrated assessment tools for countries in the South, considering the long-term impacts of decisions taken today. The challenge of land use changes in response to changes in the policy environment – macro policy, agricultural and forest policy, environmental policy – is explored with a focus on developing countries. Detailed case studies in seven developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are presented, making use of a common framework of analysis.

The book is the product of a collaboration between a large number of researchers – from 11 countries in four continents, representing several different disciplines. The work presented in this volume has been funded by the LUPIS project (Land Use Policies and Sustainable Development in Developing Countries) (February 2007 – March 2011), EU 6th Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration, Priority 1.1.6.3 Global Change and Ecosystems (European Commission, DG RTD, contract number 36955); we gratefully acknowledge this support.

To edit the book has been a challenging, but very rewarding exercise. Two of the conclusions that we draw in the book, concerning how to undertake impact assessment studies, are also very relevant with regard to our experience in undertaking this study. First: in a study which draws on a range of disciplines, from both natural and social sciences, it is important that researchers work together over an extended period of time, in order to clarify and resolve differences in perspective and even terminology; mutual respect for, and understanding of, each other's viewpoint is crucial. Second: a study such as this necessarily involves an iterative process, even till the last stage; the detailed research plan set out at the beginning has legitimately, indeed necessarily, been modified significantly in the process of carrying it out. We are confident that we speak on behalf of all those who have contributed when we say that we have learned a great deal from this exercise, and are happy to have this opportunity to share our findings.

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One of the contributors to this book, Louis Gachimbi, of the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), a partner in the LUPIS consortium, died in a car accident on 19 January 2012, during the publication process. We deeply regret the loss to his colleagues, friends, and particularly to Louis' family.