



Relevance of Land Tenure Security to Rural Land Use Planning

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Abstract

The study review literatures on the relevance of land tenure security in rural land use planning. The introductory part of the paper gives background information about land, land tenure security, and land use planning with an emphasis on disadvantaged groups known as vulnerable in rural areas. A literature review, which forms another section of the work, reveals the in-depth concept of rural land use planning, land tenure, and land tenure security. The latter part of the paper examined the relevance of land tenure security in rural land use planning. Based on the literature reviewed, the study discovered that land tenure security is relevant in rural land use planning in the following ways: sustainable use of land, improvement in land productivity, livelihood security, sustainable community, land use conflict, and dispute resolution, poverty alleviation, reduction in environmental degradation, and food security. The study concluded that land tenure security is interlinked with rural land use planning and should be considered an important issue for rural development.

Keywords: land tenure security, land use planning, rural communities, disadvantaged group

1.0 Introduction

Land is seen as a vital resource for food security, poverty reduction, and economic development (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (2015). It is also considered the basis of human society because it provides food, water, shelter, and clothing. According to Eze, Konkwo, Orebiyi, and Kadiri (2011), land is fundamental to the existence of man and society. No society, either urban or rural area can survive as an entity without land (Olayiwola & Adeleye, 2006). However, conflicts between different land users are on the increase due to different competing interests on land (Mabikke, 2016). This has led to inequality, fragmentation, land speculation, poverty, food insecurity, and environmental degradation. All of these problems are directly linked to land issues as a result of tenure insecurity and poor rural land use planning (Oladehinde, 2019).

According to Chigbu et al (2016), Land tenure security and rural land use planning are important and interlinked issues for rural development. Land tenure security which refers to the degree of confidence that land users will not be deprived of their rights as well as the economic benefits that flow from it, can be seen as a tool for improving the living conditions of rural poor. In another dimension, security of tenure has the ability to enhance the quality of life, increase income, reduce poverty status, reduce land use conflict, and reduce peri-urban encroachment into rural lands which is central to rural planning (Oladehinde, Popoola, Fatusin, & Adeyeni, 2017). However, this cannot be done without effective sustainable rural land use planning.

Land use planning according to Metternicht (2017) is the process by which society, through its institutions, decides where, within its territory, different socioeconomic activities such as housing, agriculture, industry, and commerce should take place. The role of land use planning is to enable efficient allocation, functional patterning, and balanced distribution of land resources which has profound impacts on social, economic, and environmental development. Nevertheless, people-centered

development is not sustainable in the absence of secure tenure on land. One of the critical questions that remain unanswered is that if land use planning according to Mabikke et al (2016) serves as a tool for national, regional, and local development, can it also serve as another means for securing tenure? Any activity that is solely dependent on land use planning without considering the relevance of land tenure security creates a wider gap in answering this important question.

Rural land use planning should be sufficient enough to protect the vulnerable through allocation and zoning of land for specific uses, regulation of the intensity of use, and formulation of legal and administrative instruments that support the plan, against present and future use. For there to be development in rural communities, sustainable land use planning should be done appropriately, so that the rights of the disadvantaged group (marginalised and vulnerable group) can be protected against eviction and conflict. If the rights of the disadvantaged groups (that is women, Indigenous, marginalised, and the landless) are protected; incidences of competing claims, food insecurity, conflicts, and evictions will reduce to the barest minimum. Most importantly, it will lead to better use of land. Previous studies have examined land tenure security and land use planning separately (Metternicht, 2017, Kundu, 2002, Philip, 2014; Oladehinde, 2019, Oladehinde et al., 2024). Few other studies that were centered on land tenure security and land use planning in a single study neglected an examination on the relevance of land tenure security to rural land use planning (Mabikke, et al., 2016; Chigbu et al., 2015). Hence the need for this study. In addition, the concepts of land tenure security and land use planning are scarcely addressed together in planning and development practices. In many rural communities of developing countries, land use planning initiatives often exist but are either isolated or not sufficiently linked with tenure security. The study aims to examine the relevance of land tenure security to rural land use planning through a systematic review of papers.

To achieve this, the study examines the concept of land tenure security, rural land use planning, and the relevance of land tenure security to rural land use planning.

2.0 Methodology

This review paper adopted a systematic review method. The review method is based on the quality of inputs from different sources (Mauda et al., 2022; Higgins, Balint, Liversage, & Winters, 2018; Chigbu, Alemayehu & Dachaga, 2019). It was also based on the uncertainty in the literature review regarding the concept of land tenure security, rural land use planning, and relevance of land tenure security to rural land use planning. Comprehensive review through systematic method can provide a well-defined process to identify, evaluate, and interpret all available evidence. It involved a systematic review of published academic literature, case studies, and policy papers between 1988 – 2024.

A search was conducted across different databases, namely – google scholar, Scopus, DOAJ, and Web of Science, among others, using the following terms: land tenure security, security of land tenure, tenure security, rural, land use, land use planning and relevance of land tenure security to rural land use planning. Papers not written in English, conference papers, and special editorial issues were excluded during the process of searching for previous papers.

3.0 Concept of Rural Land Use Planning and Land Tenure Security

3.1 Concept of Rural Land Use Planning

A typical land use plan is made up of multiple elements that represent all, some, or all of the information depicted in Figure 1. A land-use plan is typically a report that includes descriptive text, maps, statistics, and visuals that show how land is used, and developed, and what possibilities it has as well as the obligations and limitations that come with it. The primary output and document that records the results of the land-use planning process is a land-use plan. It is a tool for organizing improvements and land uses in space as well as for controlling, regulating, and optimizing land development. A

land-use plan contains numerous data and information on current and future land uses and the development that goes along with them.

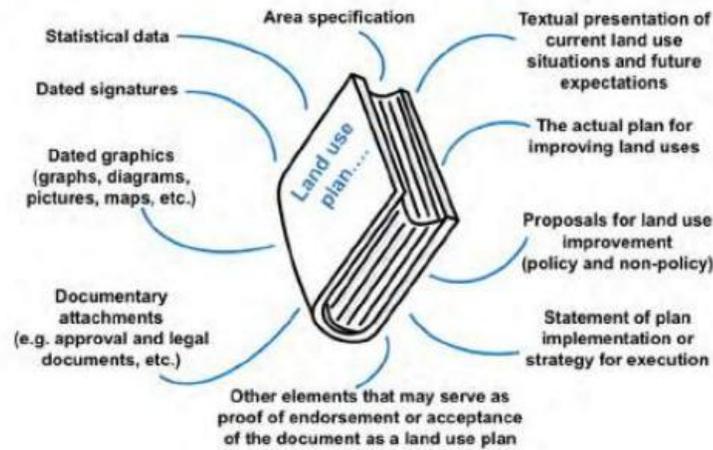


Figure 1: Various information contained in a land use plan

Source: Adopted from Chigbu et al. (2016)

The bulk of literature that exists on the subject of land use planning is vast. Land use planning is known to be fraught with many definitional ambiguities. Despite this, some notable efforts have been made in defining land use planning in ways that make it understandable. According to Owei, Obinna, and Ede (2010), land use planning is a process aimed at achieving orderly physical development with the overall aim of evolving a functional and liveable environment where individual and common goals can be achieved. FAO (1993) described it as the systematic assessment of land and water potential, alternatives for land use, and economic and social conditions in order to select and adopt the best land-use options. GTZ (1995) explained it as an iterative, flexible, and incremental process that is based on the dialogue amongst all stakeholders aiming to define sustainable land uses in rural areas. FAO and UNEP (1999) referred to it as a systematic and iterative procedure carried out in order to create an enabling environment for sustainable development of land resources that meets people's needs and demands. World Bank (2010) defined it as a public policy exercise that designates and regulates the use of land in order to improve a community's physical, economic,

and social efficiency and well-being". From these definitions, it can be inferred that rural land use planning involves many actions and decisions undertaken to guide the allocation and use of land; in order to situate or influence different land-based activities in patterns that will be beneficial to people who live on or use the land and the environment. Its purpose is to select and put into practice those land uses that will best meet the needs of the people while safeguarding resources for the future. Rural land use planning is an essential instrument for achieving adequate land use, sustainable use, and conservation of natural resources, among others.

The main role of land use planning in human settlements is to organise or control land uses relating to socioeconomic activities that occur within a particular area. It has a direct impact on the way people live in a particular place (World Bank, 2012). It specified how and where land uses should occur, by influencing the performance of land activities, as well as the level of human interrelations that occur on land. According to Chigbu et al. (2015), land use planning serves as a necessary development catalyst in the following ways.

- i. It can be used to determine the physical boundaries of land
- ii. It serves as a means for imposing development restrictions and controls in order to encourage sustainable development.
- iii. It serves as an instrument for identifying or determining land areas, parcels, land uses, and users.
- iv. It provides an opportunity for stakeholder involvement, compensation of claims, and community participation.

In general, the essence of rural land use planning is to ensure that rural activities are organised and developed with due consideration for the protection of the public interest which includes safety, convenience, efficiency, resource conservation, environmental quality, and social equity, among others (Nnah et al., 2007).

3.2 Concept of Land Tenure and Land Tenure Security

Land tenure is essential for the sustainable management of natural resources. It refers to the way in which land is held or owned by individuals and groups, as well as the legal or customary relationships among people regarding land (Oladehinde, 2019; Oladeihnde et al., 2024). Essentially, tenure reflects the connections between people and the land, as well as among individuals and groups in their interactions with land and natural resources. Land tenure serves as a tool for conservation, as it encompasses the rules and regulations used to control and manage natural resources, biodiversity, and the general environment. The fundamental rules of land tenure delineate how property rights (use, control, and transfer) are allocated within societies, usually defined through statutory or customary law. In Nigeria, the land tenure system is the process through which land ownership is granted to individuals or groups of people. It is an institutional framework that is used to govern decisions about land ownership, use, value, and development. The land tenure system encompasses the rules and procedures governing the rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups in acquiring, using, and controlling land. The prevailing land tenure system in a society determines the scope of rights and interests that can be owned in that society over land.

Land tenure security means different things to different people. For one to have a better idea of tenure security, it is very important to have a better understanding of the meaning of tenure. Tenure according to Chigbu et al. (2016) is the way in which rights, restrictions, and responsibilities that people have with respect to land are held (FIG, 1999). The issue of land tenure security is very important because to hold rights on land is one thing; to enjoy those rights without threats from other people or the government is another issue. Land tenure security can be referred to as the ability to enforce claims on land which is supported by regulatory frameworks (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2008). It can also be defined as the confidence of land right holders in certainty of their enjoyment of the return to their land investment from illegal claims of others (Nguyen, 2014). In the view of Boto and La Peccerella

(2012), land tenure security is the certainty or assurance that a person's rights to land will be recognized by others and protected in cases of specific challenges. According to van Asperen and Zevenbergen (2007), land tenure security is the belief that a person or group of people has about their rights to a plot of land on a continuous basis, free from outside influence and the danger of eviction. Whether the land is used or is transferred to a third party, it includes the potential to profit from labor and capital invested in that land (Place et al., 1994, Roth and Smith, 1995). Tenure security occurs when a landowner feels safe from being forcibly removed from their property and believes there is little chance of losing land-related assets in the future (Deininger, 2003). In this situation, assurance is crucial since it is the perception and feeling that support the belief that one's land rights are protected.

Land tenure security, which is backed by a well-established body of legal regulations that guarantee the rights of access and use of land, is frequently defined as the right of individuals and groups to effective governmental protection against forceful eviction (Payne and Durand-Lasserve, 2012, Durand-Lasserve, 2006). UN-Habitat (2004) also described it as an "agreement between an individual or group to land and residential property, which is governed and regulated by a legal and administrative framework that includes customary and statutory frameworks." According to the aforementioned concepts, land tenure security is crucial for fostering sustainable development and reducing poverty since it supports social inclusion, ecological sustainability, and economic growth. People in rural communities may be able to invest in their homes and means of subsistence if they have secure land tenure.

Tenure security is largely based on people's perceptions and cannot be quantitatively assessed. Depending on the situation, security of tenure characteristics can vary. For instance, someone may be granted permission to cultivate a piece of land for six months, and their tenure is secure provided they are not subjected to eviction during the time.

Tenure security can therefore be linked to tenure duration in relation to the time required to recoup investment costs. Therefore, the individual who has six months to use the land will not plant trees, make irrigation investments, or take action to stop soil erosion because there is not enough time for them to reap the benefits of their investment. Even while it is secure for short-term investments, the tenure is uncertain for long-term ones.

Land tenure security is the main factor influencing people's enjoyment of their rights, interests, and privileges on land (Chigbu et al., 2015). People with insecure tenure face the risk that competing claims will threaten their land rights and even lost as a result of eviction. The ability of households/rural poor to obtain enough food and to have sustainable rural lifestyles is severely hampered in the absence of tenure security (Boto and La Peccerella, 2012). Land tenure security can be viewed from different ranges of continuum of land rights (UN-Habitat, 2008). This continuum of land rights is used to categorise land tenure with varying degrees of security, responsibility, and restriction. The continuum embraces people with little or no tenure security (especially people with no documents, no contracts, and little or no legal protection) to groups of people with high tenure security (the case of people with formal land documentation, land title, and legal protection) (see Figure 2).

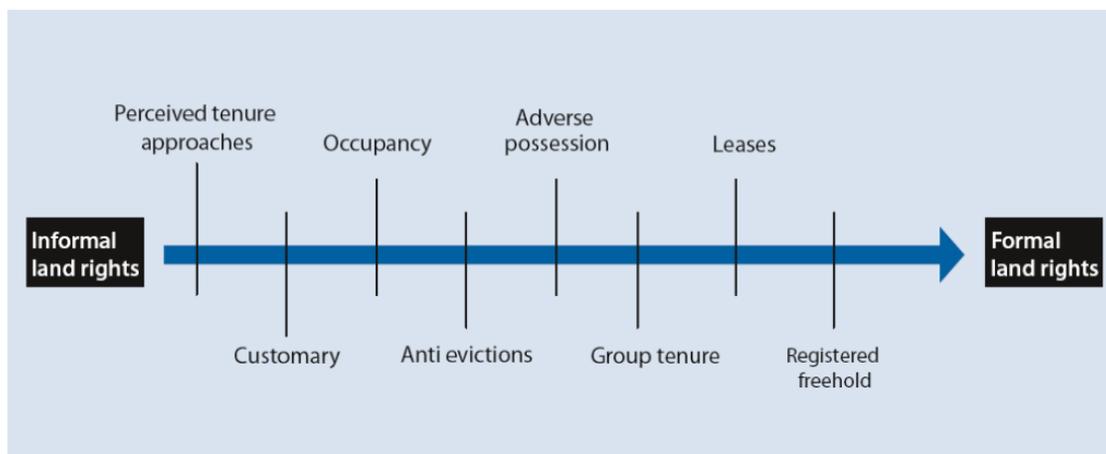


Figure 2: The Continuum of Land Rights

Source: Adopted from UN-Habitat (2008)

Land tenure security (based on continuum of land rights concept) includes all the categories of people from informal land rights (tenure) to formal land rights (tenure). It is important to improve the standard of living in developing countries in the following ways.

- i. It enables the protection of fundamental rights of vulnerable to land which is necessary for better living conditions in rural communities
- ii. It embraces the practices of customary land tenure systems which is predominantly practiced in many developing countries
- iii. It leads to the recognition of land rights of disadvantaged groups particularly women, migrants, landless about access and use of land

In general, land tenure security influences every aspect of landholding or property and it is relevant in land use planning in solving most of the challenges faced by rural communities.

4.0 Relevance of Land Tenure Security to Rural Land Use Planning

Based on the earlier discussion, land use planning, which is seen as a continuous process of allocating land for specific use to meet the desired needs of different groups of people (women, Indigenous, marginalized, migrants, and landless) within a community, is very important in rural planning. The essence of land use planning is to ensure harmony, convenience, and safety in the use of land as well as to preserve land resources to meet present and future needs. However, despite the essence of land use planning, there is still a wide gap that is yet to be filled especially in ensuring rural development. As noted by Chigbu et al. (2016) land use planning serves as a tool for development either at the local level or national level. It cannot be used as a means for securing the tenure of different social groups, especially in rural areas. This gap makes land tenure security to be relevant to rural land use planning. One thing is the allocation of land for specific use another thing is the protection of the right to land against external claims. Rural land use can truly be sustainable in the presence of high

tenure security and vice versa. Land tenure security is therefore very important in rural land use planning.

Several studies have shown the relevance of land tenure security in rural land use planning. Some of the relevance identified include sustainable use of land, improvement in land productivity, sustainable natural resource management, livelihood security, sustainable settlement, land use conflict and dispute resolution, poverty alleviation, reduction in environmental degradation, and food security. (Phillip, 2014; Tsue, 2014; Field, 2014; Kundu, 2002; Twerefou, 2011; Kameri-Mbote, 2008; Ogolla and Mugabe, 1996; IFAD, 2015; Chaikaire et al., 2010; Falk, 2016)

Studies related to the importance of security of tenure on land use (Field, 2010; Kundu, 2002; Twerefou, et al., 2011), shows that secure tenure enables landholder to invest considerable amount of savings, labour, creativity, and organisational energies in building houses and improving their living environment. This assertion is supported by Bruce and Migot-Adholla (1994), that tenure security is important for providing incentives for investment in land use. The study of Feder et al. (1988) in Thailand concluded that tenure security provides better access to larger amounts of formal credit, as well as higher levels of investment in the land and higher land process. Other studies that also supported this assertion include Deininger and Chamorro (2002) for Nicaragua; Alston et al. (1996) for Brazil; and Cater and Olinto (2003) for Paraguay. Land use planning improves resource allocation while security of tenure increases investment in land.

A study by Tsue (2014) shows that land tenure security enhances the sustainable use of rural land in the study area while insecurity of tenure among rural dwellers discourages the conservation of land resources. According to Tsue (2014), land users can go the extra mile to improve their land through environmental management and protection, improvement in technology and enforcement of environmental impact assessment, evaluation of agricultural land use, and the development of basic

infrastructure on the land. On the other hand, Phillip (2014) argued that insecure tenure discourages land users from engaging in any meaningful sustainable land use. In this scenario, residents are not sure of their security in the land they occupy. Thus, they are occupied with the fear that someone else can claim the land at any time.

FAO (not dated) asserted that land tenure security is relevant in improving the livelihood security of rural dwellers. FAO (not dated) further explained that security of tenure whether through formal, informal, customary, or other means, is necessary for rural households to enjoy sustainable livelihoods. When land tenure of allocated land is secure, the means of livelihood of the rural poor will be secure from external threats. Security of tenure can be seen as a tool for protecting the livelihood of different groups of people (especially women and migrants). According to Holden and Ghebru (2016) rural households with more secure land tenure whether male or female, are more likely to invest in land, labor, and inputs and are much more likely to have higher agricultural production than those with less secure land tenure. Livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and enhance its capability both now and in the future. When livelihood is sustainable, the quality of life/well-being of the rural poor will be improved.

Sustainable natural resource management involves investigations into how resources are used, what affects them, and how they can be best used, protected, and preserved. Security of tenure aims to improve the way communities deal with natural resources to ensure their sustainable availability and functionality (Chigbu et al., 2016). Studies in the literature have shown that land tenure security provides an incentive to use land and resources in a more sustainable manner (Marken and Gornott, 2022; Panichvejsunti et al., 2018). Land tenure security is relevant in promoting responsible use of land resources such as water, and forest, among others. Clear rights incentivize landholders to adopt sustainable practices and conserve resources, leading to better environmental outcomes and alignment with land use planning objectives focused on

sustainability. Land tenure security provides opportunities for improvements in issues relating to water and forest resources.

Land tenure security is relevant in resolving conflict and reducing disputes among rural dwellers. Apart from the fact that land use planning regulates how land is used, it may not be able to resolve conflict among rural dwellers. Conflict arises as a result of insecure tenure between disadvantaged groups (i.e. pastoralists and farmers). It makes land owners to be pushed off their land without fair compensation. Anytime evictions occur, violence is commonly used for both enforcement and defense. Deininger et al. (2006) asserted that security of land tenure provides social stability through fewer conflicts and disputes. Liversage, Chakrabarti & Barbanente, (2020) added that lack of secure tenure to land disempowered the vulnerable, and are exposed to combined threat of conflict. Land tenure security with adequate enforcement can be used to resolve conflict, even if the land has been zoned for a particular use. Land tenure security has the ability to protect land users from competing claims to the same plot of land (Oladehinde et al., 2024). It also gives the land owner the confidence to exercise his/her right to the land. As noted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2005), competing claim between ethnic groups or communities or socio-economic groups on limited resources leads to violent conflict and dispute especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (i.e. Nigeria, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda among others) where there is insecure tenure.

Land tenure security is relevant in alleviating poverty among rural dwellers. Land use planning serves as a guide in the allocation and distribution of land for different uses. Security of tenure helps people to derive income from the land on a continuous basis. According to Jayne et al (2002), more than 70 – 80% of the bulk of the population derives their income from land-based activities such as farming, rearing animals, fishing, and hunting among others. In the wise, land can be seen as a source of wealth or an uplifting asset for the rural poor. As noted by Chikaire et al. (2010) security

of tenure is the key to having control over major decisions, such as which crop to grow and whether crops are to be grown for subsistence or commercial purposes, what technique to use, what to conserve, and what to sell. It influences the extent to which farmers are prepared to invest in the long-term well-being of their land or to adopt new technologies and innovations. IFAD (2015) inserted that a lack of secure land tenure exacerbates poverty and contributes to social instability. This shows that when men and women are insecure on land, particularly in rural areas, so many things will be affected. This will result in a low level of income, low level of investment, inability to make decisions, inability to source for credit facility, and inability to seek support, among others Land tenure security for both men and women is just one step on the road to reducing rural poverty.

Land tenure security is relevant in reducing landholding inequity among the rural poor especially landless and those with secondary rights. One thing is the allocation of land for different uses another thing is the identification of vulnerable and marginalised who depend on small pieces of land for subsistence and survival. Landholding inequity is an underlining factor for poor rural land use planning particularly when large landless or land-poor populations have limited livelihood opportunities (Oladehinde & Olayiwola, 2021). Land tenure security tends to protect the interest of the landless against present and future eviction. It creates an atmosphere for fairness in security to land where all social classes (i.e. land owners, landless, and vulnerable such as women and migrants) can exercise some level of control on the land. In this wise, grievances which is deeply rooted in a strong sense of injustice will be reduced.

Similarly, land tenure security is relevant in reducing inequality among disadvantaged groups through the enforcement of the law. Studies have shown that land tenure security through land titling and formal recognition of property is relevant in protecting rural dwellers from external threats of those seeking to acquire the land

(Doss et al., 2013; FAO, not dated). Due compensation will be paid if eventually the land is acquired for large-scale investment or for public use. Land tenure security can be used to enforce human rights and reduce discrimination. Although rural land use planning regulates and manages land, it is less concerned about the socioeconomic characteristics of the end user, be it rich or poor. The importance of security of tenure is very broad, especially for women and other disadvantaged groups. First, it determines the equality of opportunity, including women's bargaining power, the ability to invest in land for physical and economic well-being and withstand sudden illness, financial crises, and other shocks (World Bank, 2017).

Land tenure security makes rural communities to be more sustainable. The issue of sustainable community is tied to the secured tenure of accessed land. In other words, a sustainable community is possible when the right of every woman, youth, and migrants is secured. In another dimension, security of tenure as well as land use policies can be used as a tool for enforcing restrictions on other uses. As a result, any activity which will render the disadvantaged group to be landless can be jettisoned. This protects land resources from external encroachment. Lunkapis (2015) supported this view that the security of land tenure is a prerequisite for achieving a sustainable community. Security of tenure as well as land use policy can shape the future of a community sustainably.

Many studies have shown the importance of land tenure security in environmental performance (Clover & Eriksen, 2009; Chigbu et al., 2022). The most commonly mentioned role that land tenure security plays is restoring degraded lands. This shows that security of land tenure is relevant in reducing environmental degradation. It is common knowledge that most of the rural lands are under pressure from different competing interests. This has generated a lot of problems such as fragmentation of land, speculation of land, and subdivision of land, among others. Apart from this, most of the landowners who migrated to urban areas due to poverty,

still hold on to their rural lands. In this wise, intending land users do not have secured access to some of the land. The effect of this is that different mechanisms of environmental protection will be very difficult and environmental degradation will be on the increase. But when there is secured access to rural land, especially by rural poor. Environmental degradation will be reduced drastically. Every land user will be emotionally attached to the land and will try every means to protect the land from being degraded. The moment they have a high-security perception of their land tendencies to adopt measures to reduce environmental degradation will increase.

Land tenure security is important in strengthening food security. Food security is all people at all times having access to a regular intake of food in the quantity and quality (balanced nutrient) that meets their dietary needs for healthy living. Land Use Planning and tenure security play crucial roles in food security. Land Use Planning makes land available for different uses within a specific nation, region, municipality, or village. However, land availability cannot lead to food security unless there is security in land tenure for the poor (Chigbu et al., 2016). According to Hudson (2000), land is the most important factor to food security. Hudson (2000) further noted that food security occurs when there is security of tenure to land. Amsalu (2006) reiterated that people with security of tenure are more likely to be food secure. The presence of security of tenure can eliminate the uncertainty of expropriation and encourage farmers to make long-term investment decisions and best practices on land. Food productivity and food security issues are some of the challenges that agricultural development in rural areas can alleviate particularly when people have high security perception on the land. Security of tenure can guarantee the tenancy of the rural poor from one cropping season to another. It gives the farmers the ability to plant a long duration of crops. It also helps the farmers to use the land for collateral to acquire loans from banks which can help them to invest in agriculture as well as adopt new innovations on the land that can improve food productivity and strengthen food security.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The study examined the relevance of land tenure security on rural land use planning. The study reviewed different literature on the concept of land use planning and land tenure security. The study also studies the relevance of land tenure security in rural land use planning. The study discovered that land tenure security is relevant in rural land use planning in the following ways; sustainable use of land, improvement in land productivity, livelihood security, sustainable settlement, land use conflict and dispute resolution, poverty alleviation, reduction in environmental degradation, and food security. The study concluded that land tenure security is interlinked with rural land use planning and should be considered an important issue for rural development.

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