

## **ABSTRACT**

In recent years, many African states have come under external pressure to reform their land ownership regimes in the direction of the removal of state control and the promotion of absolute and individual rights of ownership. Such policies are proving expensive and far-reaching in terms of the stability of land rights. The article discusses them critically under the headings of the colonial heritage, the resistance of those threatened or affected with the loss of collective rights, the question of security of land-ownership and the role of the state. The paper concludes by appealing for a reform which is simple and clear, sensitive to local cultural and environmental peculiarities, and combines the public interest in secure food supplies with the recognition of existing rights in land.