

Data editor guidelines - general-

General remarks and instructions.

- [Introduction](#)
- [1.1 Land Matrix data policy](#)
- [1.2 Land Matrix deal definition: What is a land deal?](#)
- [1.3 Minimum information criteria](#)
- [1.4 Accuracy of information and conflicting information](#)
- [1.5 Subsumed deals](#)
- [1.6 Year-/date-based data](#)

Introduction

The Data Editor Guidelines — guidelines for data entry — have been developed to provide instructions, rules, and guidance for entering data on large-scale land acquisitions (LSLAs) into the Land Matrix (LM) database using the LM Data Editor application.

The Data Editor Guidelines consist of two parts: a general section outlining overarching principles, and a specific section that provides detailed descriptions and guidance on all variables within the Land Matrix database.

For help and instructions regarding the technical functionalities and features of the LM application, please refer to the manual of the web-application: [Manual LM web portal](#). New data reporters, editors and administrators should read this manual first.

For questions on the deal updating process, please refer to the fully updating guidelines:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bzejMADscywlGeESZPA-80rujh8kRbfz/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=102660977782443621588&rtpof=true&sd=true

Important: To familiarise yourself with data entry or to test certain aspects, you should not work on the live version of the database, but on <https://dev.landmatrix.org/deal/add/>.

Please note: The Data Editor Guidelines are a living document. They will be continuously updated and refined in line with future software and database developments, as well as user feedback.

1.1 Land Matrix data policy

The Land Matrix Initiative has an **open data policy** that aims to provide information on large-scale land acquisitions free from constraints and restrictions on use. Data, infographics, charts, maps, and other material provided on the Land Matrix website carry the [Creative Commons CC BY 4.0 International](#) license. This means users are permitted to download, share, and adapt the material for any use, including commercial use, but must indicate any modification made and attribute the material appropriately.

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1.2 Land Matrix deal definition: What is a land deal?

The Land Matrix defines a land deal as any intended, concluded, or failed attempt to acquire land through purchase, lease, or concession for agricultural production, timber extraction, carbon trading, renewable energy production, industry, mining, oil and gas extraction, conservation, tourism, and land speculation in low- and middle-income countries.

The Land Matrix Global Observatory records deals that:

Entail a transfer of rights to use, control, or ownership of land through sale, lease, or concession;

Have been negotiated or concluded in the year 2000 or later;

Cover an area of 200 hectares or more;

Imply a potential effect on smallholder livelihoods, local community use, important ecosystem service provision, or on the distribution of land (rights).

Please note: For some of the countries hosting a Land Matrix National Land Observatory (NLO), the thresholds applied differ slightly from those of the Global Observatory. This is currently the case in Cameroon, Philippines, Senegal, and Uganda, where the NLOs apply a reduced minimum area size of 50 hectares per deal.

1.3 Minimum information criteria

For a deal recorded in the Land Matrix database to be publicly accessible on the Land Matrix website, it must meet certain data requirements, referred to as *minimum information criteria*:

1. Location: At least the target country of the deal must be known and recorded.
2. Investor names: At least the name of one investor must be known and recorded.
3. Data sources: At least one data source must be available and specified.
4. Deal size: At least one value must be specified for one of the three variables on land area size.

If one of these four minimum criteria is not met, the deal will remain in the database for further research but will only be accessible to registered and logged-in users.

1.4 Accuracy of information and conflicting information

Information on large-scale land investments is often fragmentary and, in some cases, it is difficult to fully assess the details of individual cases. Given this lack of data, as well as the fact that the Land Matrix only captures certain aspects in a schematised manner, their complexity might not be completely reflected.

Nevertheless, it is crucial that all information collected in the database is based on credible data sources and can be verified against these. It is therefore essential that all sources of information used are recorded in the "Data sources" section within the deal. Variables for which no data sources could be found despite intensive research must be left blank.

In cases of diverging or contradictory information, each piece of information should be carefully verified and its plausibility assessed.

If uncertainties remain and none of the sources can be identified as clearly more reliable or plausible, the more moderate value or statement should be used.

A clear note on the existing discrepancies must be provided in the comment field of the respective variable, along with a justification for the information ultimately entered.

Important: All sources of information used must be specified in the **"Data sources"** section to ensure that the collected data can be verified against these sources.

Please note: The comment fields of each variable can and should be used to enrich the data and provide additional details on deals, particularly in the case of complex deals. They also allow you to include personal remarks for other users, such as doubts regarding specific sources or quotations. Comment fields are also of particular importance for subsumed deals (see Section 1.5).

1.5 Subsumed deals

The Land Matrix records individual large-scale land acquisitions that meet the criteria defined in the Land Matrix deal definition. These land deals represent the primary entity and main object of the Land Matrix database. However, there are cases where an investor has undertaken several contractually independent land acquisitions within the same country or region, and the available information only refers to all these projects collectively, that is, to the investor's overall investment in that country or region. In such cases where the available information is not sufficiently detailed to record individual deals and where these deals would therefore have to be excluded from the database, there is no better option but to subsume various deals under one (parent-) deal. In such situations and only in such situations, multiple deals of the same investor within the same region or country should, by exception, be combined and recorded as a so-called "subsumed deal."

When recording a "subsumed deal", the **comment fields** are of particular importance, as only detailed comments—at a minimum under *Location* and *Land Area*—can both **indicate that the deal is a "subsumed deal"** and help address and compensate for inherent inaccuracies.

While it is, of course, an advantage not to have to omit the individual deals entirely, it must be clearly understood that "subsumed deals" inherently involve certain attribution inaccuracies and an increased risk of deal duplications.

Therefore, with every deal update, an attempt should be made to find further details and to split these subsumed deals into separate individual deals. For investors involved in subsumed deals, particular care must be taken to verify whether deals for these investors have already been recorded in the same country and to ensure that the investments included in the "subsumed deal" have not already been entered as individual deals in the database.

1.6 Year-/date-based data

To be able to track the evolution of a deal over time, so-called year-/date-based variables were introduced in the LM database. With these, it is possible to record multiple values for one variable and assign them to different years or dates and thus to track the evolution/progress of certain aspects of a deal over time (e.g. the area size in operation or the implementation process).

If data of a year-/date-based variable changed over time and these different values are available for different points in time (**“Date”**), you should enter the corresponding values for all these points in time, not just for the most recent one. In the data editor, each box represents one of these points in time at which the value of the variable changed.

To activate additional boxes, press the "+" icon on the right-hand side of each box.