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Market-oriented land transfers in rural Vietnam: navigating challenges for sustainable and equitable development

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Market-oriented transfers of collectively owned rural land in Vietnam are pivotal for advancing rural development, enhancing agricultural productivity, and fostering socioeconomic progress. This study examines the challenges and opportunities associated with these transfers within Vietnam's unique socio-political context. Despite significant changes since the implementation of the Đổi Mới economic policies in 1986, Vietnam continues to face obstacles such as land tenure insecurity, corruption in land administration, and socioeconomic disparities that limit access to land markets for lower-income farmers. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates quantitative data from land transfer records and economic statistics with qualitative insights from interviews and focus group discussions conducted in the Red River Delta, Mekong Delta, and Central Highlands. Econometric models assess the impacts of land market activities on various economic indicators, while thematic analysis explores governance issues, tenure rights, and the socioeconomic consequences of land use. Econometric analysis revealed that land market activities significantly improved agricultural productivity, increased rural incomes, and stimulated investment, although risks of land concentration and rising rural inequalities persist. Findings indicate that while market-oriented land transfers can enhance agricultural production and stimulate rural investment, issues of land concentration and the potential exacerbation of rural inequalities persist. Environmental concerns, such as the risk of land over-exploitation leading to degradation, are also significant. These results underscore the imperative for Vietnam to implement reforms within its specific context. Comparative experiences from countries like China and Rwanda highlight that land fragmentation and social imbalance can emerge as detrimental consequences if not properly managed. Policy recommendations emphasize strengthening property rights, combating corruption through increased transparency and institutional safeguards, ensuring equitable access to land markets for smallholder farmers, and promoting sustainable land resource utilization. Enhancing institutional capacity and engaging international stakeholders are identified as crucial elements for effective policy implementation. In conclusion, careful and participatory policy formulation, along with effective execution, is essential for Vietnam to leverage the benefits of market-oriented land transfers while mitigating associated risks. Addressing the identified challenges can lead to a robust rural land system that supports agricultural productivity, promotes social equity, and protects the environment, ultimately

contributing to the nation's overall development. Future research should monitor the long-term impacts of these reforms on livelihoods, social dynamics, and the environment to inform ongoing policy refinement.

KEYWORDS

market-oriented land transfers, rural collective land, land tenure security vietnam land reforms, rural development, sustainable land

1 Introduction

Market-oriented land transfers have become a prevalent approach that significantly contributes to the implementation of strategies designed to stimulate rural development, improve productivity, and encourage socio-economic progress in developing countries. In numerous societies undergoing a transition from collectivist land management to a market-oriented framework, the issue of land reform extends beyond conventional considerations like food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development. Vietnam, characterized by its rich agricultural heritage and fast-evolving economy, offers valuable perspectives on the difficulties and prospects associated with implementing market-driven land transfers in a nation centered around its peasant population (Kar et al., 2024). In the last 3 decades, the rural regions of Vietnam have undergone notable changes due to the adoption of the doi moi economic reform policy, alterations in agricultural policies and practices, and an increase in urbanization. The administration and conveyance of rural collective land are central to these transformations. Once operating within the limitations of socialist planning and viewing Vietnam as a nation defined by collective and state ownership of land, the country now finds itself at a crucial juncture in its shift towards embracing market-oriented systems of land tenure (Hayden and Le Tran, 2024). The decision is anticipated to facilitate the development of the country's agrarian infrastructure by offering incentives to rural investors, enhancing production in agricultural areas and sectors, and promoting socio-economic advancement (Anarbayev et al., 2024). However, Vietnam seems to face particular legislative challenges, governance problems, and socio-economic inequalities that hinder the successful execution of these policies in comparison to other countries undergoing similar transformations (Nguyen and Dinh, 2024). The existing literature on market-oriented land transfers does not provide a comprehensive analysis across economic, social, and environmental aspects, especially when assessing markets within the context of Vietnam's socio-political framework (Mai, 2024). Traditionally, most prior investigations have concentrated on analyzing specific impacts, whether concerning economic factors or policy consequences. Nevertheless, none of the previous studies have aimed to examine the comprehensive range of effects linked to land reforms in a detailed and accessible way. This has resulted in a lack of clarity regarding suitable comparisons with other comparable rural economy countries that have implemented land reforms similar to those in Vietnam, and what knowledge might be derived from this examination. The preliminary claim concerning the latest policy advancements holds validity. Several specific reasons underscore the importance of this study, among them being Vietnam's rapid modernization and strategies for global

economic integration, which have intensified debates surrounding land policy reforms (Gafuraningtyas et al., 2024; Ngoc et al., 2024).

Other issues include unpredictable land tenure, corruption in land management, and the possibility of escalating socioeconomic disparities highlight the need for focused study to support decision-makers and important land sector players (Mory, 2024). Furthermore, important factors that need careful consideration are introduced by problems like the impact of land transfers on rural people and the environmental consequences of sustainable land use. In order to determine obstacles to successful implementation, this research aims to examine the regulations controlling market-oriented transfers of rural land in Vietnam. This essay specifically attempts to investigate how these changes affect land tenure systems in the chosen rural regions on an economic, social, and environmental level (Mory, 2024; Xia et al., 2024).

This research offers policy recommendations for sustainable and inclusive development in Vietnam, addressing a significant gap in the literature and contributing to international discussions on land reform. It serves as a valuable resource for academics and policymakers, emphasizing holistic rural development strategies to foster economic growth, improve living standards, and promote environmental sustainability.

This study aims to investigate the implementation and implications of market-oriented rural land transfers in Vietnam within its distinct socio-political and economic context. Specifically, it seeks to address the following core questions: (1) What are the institutional, legal, and governance challenges hindering effective land market functioning? (2) How do land transfers impact rural productivity, household income, and social equity? (3) What lessons can be drawn from comparative global experiences to inform Vietnam's reform strategy? Through a combination of qualitative fieldwork and quantitative econometric analysis, this research aims to identify policy gaps, stakeholder concerns, and unintended outcomes associated with market-oriented land transfers. The findings will inform practical recommendations to support more sustainable, equitable, and transparent land governance systems in Vietnam.

2 Literature review

2.1 Historical overview of rural collective land in vietnam

The concept of shared ownership of land in Vietnam originated during the early socialist period, where land was viewed as a communal asset intended for joint utilization. Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, reforms were implemented to facilitate land redistribution from landlords, transforming farmers into collective agriculturists to enhance land utilization. However, this

model was marked by significantly low productivity, and poverty persisted in the rural areas, resulting in the failure to realize the anticipated economic impact. The land policy in Vietnam has undergone significant changes since the Đổi Mới economic reforms in 1986, leading to enhanced production capabilities and economic improvement in the country (Chu, 2024).

The government initiated the elimination of collective farms and provided individuals with leased household plots for agricultural use, which catalyzed the development of rural areas through the establishment of private enterprises (Wu and Li, 2024). In contrast to other rural economies going through comparable shifts to market-oriented economies, this study aims to provide policy implications for sustainable and equitable growth in Vietnam. In addition to addressing its goals, this research seeks to close a significant vacuum in the body of knowledge and favorably impact the current global debates over land reform laws. For scholars, policymakers, and experts working in agricultural economics and rural development, this study is an invaluable resource. It highlights how important comprehensive approaches are to rural development in order to support sustainable environmental practices, raise living standards, and stimulate economic growth (Nguyen and Dinh, 2024; Ehrensperger et al., 2024).

2.2 Market-oriented land transfers: global perspectives

Globally, market-oriented land transfers have been used as tools to improve rural development, boost agricultural output, and streamline the structure of production and activity. For instance, China's family responsibility system, which was put into place in the 1980s, let farmers to oversee land while leasing it from the government and retaining joint ownership with it. Improving farmers' living circumstances and agricultural output required this adjustment (Robinson, 2024). However, difficulties such land fragmentation, unstable tenure, and increased inequality were faced, demonstrating the complexity of the decentralization and market-oriented reform process (Wilmsen et al., 2024).

The expansion of the land market in Sub-Saharan Africa has sometimes led to significant investors seeking out foreign large-scale agricultural purchases, therefore aggravating the problems of land-grabbing and compromising smallholder farmers (Zhou, 2024). These studies show how cost factors accompany market-oriented changes, especially in situations where land ownership arrangements are unstable and governance mechanisms are somewhat weak. On the other hand, countries like Brazil and India have liberalized their land markets in different ways, each confronting different issues with social fairness, environmental concerns, and efficiency (Cruz-Martinez, 2024). Thus, by adopting these global points of view, this research positions Vietnam's experience within the context of similar circumstances throughout the world, thereby stressing shared difficulties and successful approaches.

2.3 Current legal framework governing land transfers in Vietnam

The legal framework of Vietnam, particularly its constitution regarding land management, vividly reflects the dynamic nature of

its economy and political landscape. The framework governing land-use rights for individuals and households has been established through the Implementation of the 1993 Land Law, which outlines fundamental rights for engagement in the land market. Subsequent improvements in 2003 and 2013 broadened these rights, allowing for the transfer, exchange, and inheritance of usage rights, thereby establishing a legal framework for market-oriented land transfers (Dinh and Wesseler, 2024).

Despite advanced solutions, numerous studies highlight persistent obstacles hindering effectiveness: land tenure insecurity due to unclear ownership and usage rights, inefficient and opaque administrative methods for land transfers, and challenges like corruption and ambiguous policies that foster inequality and impede rural development. These issues create a fragile market system and exacerbate resource distribution disparities in rural areas (Scanlan et al., 2024).

This paper provides a critical analysis of the existing legal literature and examines the interplay between legislative frameworks and their real-world application. It evaluates the effectiveness of recent legal reforms and uncovers discrepancies between policy intentions and their implementation, highlighting gaps between legislative objectives and practical outcome.

2.4 Challenges to market-oriented transfers in Vietnam

The successful marketisation of land transfers in Vietnam is complicated by several factors. Economic insecurity arises from the conflict between collectivism and individualism in relation to land ownership and utilization; this jeopardizes the long-term security of usage rights for farmers and deters investment in land enhancement and engagement in land markets. Insufficient governance structures and corruption, especially in the field of land management, have enabled the unjust distribution of land resources. This scenario frequently leads to conflicts that obstruct the accessibility of the land market for disadvantaged rural inhabitants, ultimately intensifying inequality (Alhola and Gwaindepi, 2024). Significant challenges to market-oriented land transfers in Vietnam include: (1) tenure insecurity due to unclear land-use rights; (2) systemic corruption in land administration causing unfair distribution; (3) socio-economic disparities limiting market access for poorer farmers; (4) bureaucratic inefficiencies and inconsistent administrative practices across regions; and (5) limited legal awareness among rural populations, particularly among vulnerable groups. Recent Vietnamese studies (Nguyen, 2022a; Tran, 2025; Hoang et al., 2023) have further documented these challenges, emphasizing how they collectively hinder equitable and sustainable rural development.

2.5 Comparative analysis with global market-oriented reforms

The experience of Vietnam may be understood by analyzing analogous changes in other nations. China's land reforms provide significant lessons, especially the warning that results may not correspond with anticipated outcomes. In contrast, Rwandan land reforms emphasized the clarification of land ownership

rights and the integration of gender sensitivity, resulting in enhanced socio-economic results. This article employs a Peruvian case study to illustrate that while the formalization of property rights enhanced investment incentives, it simultaneously underscored the need for supplementary measures to address inequality in both Peru and Latin America (Deininger and Goyal, 2024).

The international cases included in this analysis demonstrate that market-oriented land transfers are complex processes influenced by the socio-political environment of a country (Tesfay and Araya, 2024). In addition to insights from China's household responsibility system and Rwanda's land certification program, this study draws lessons from Brazil's liberalization experiences (Cruz-Martinez, 2024) (Cruz-Martinez, 2024), Ethiopia's second-stage land certification (Tesfay and Araya, 2024) and Ghana's experiences with land administration reforms (Adusei, 2024). These comparative analyses underscore essential lessons on balancing efficiency, equity, and environmental sustainability.

3 Methodology

This research utilizes a mixed-methods research approach, combining quantitative econometric analysis and qualitative thematic analysis. The specific research design employed is cross-sectional, capturing data at a single point to examine current challenges and impacts comprehensively and also this study employs a cross-sectional research design to enhance understanding of the market-oriented transfer of rural collective land in Vietnam. This research does not claim to provide definitive solutions to land reform issues, however, we anticipate that the integration of qualitative and quantitative methodologies will enhance the understanding of the underlying factors involved in the phenomenon. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data for analysis to achieve the study objectives.

3.1 Research design

This research is segmented into two primary sections. The initial component involves qualitative research through interviews and focus group discussions with important stakeholders, including policymakers, local government officials, farmers, agricultural entrepreneurs, land administrators, and rural development agencies.

These discussions aim to gather varied perspectives on the issues, implications, and knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to market-oriented land transactions. The second aspect is quantitative, focusing on the analysis of land transfer records, government reports, and economic statistics to evaluate the extent and impact of market-oriented land transactions over time. The study seeks to provide quantified measures of the impacts of land reforms, focusing on productivity changes, rural incomes, and socio-economic effects. This approach allows for the inclusion of both the qualitative perspective, which emphasizes the personal experiences of individual participants, and the quantitative data that provides a comprehensive overview of statistics, trends, and outcomes.

3.2 Data collection

The main data for this study was gathered through field surveys conducted in key rural provinces where land reforms are being implemented, such as the Red River delta, Mekong delta, and central highlands. The current research employed purposive sampling to select participants who are directly involved with or affected by land transfer issues. This method facilitated the collection of data that is pertinent and accurately represents the experiences of individuals affected by market-oriented land reforms. Purposive sampling was specifically chosen to target individuals directly affected by or involved with land reforms, ensuring highly relevant and in-depth qualitative insights. Key stakeholders farmers, policymakers, administrators, and entrepreneurs were identified as the primary unit of analysis, providing comprehensive understanding from various perspectives crucial for assessing policy impacts.

Focus group discussions were conducted to provide the researchers with qualitative insights into the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of stakeholders regarding these reforms. Data was gathered from official documents, policy papers, peer-reviewed articles, and statistical sources. Several sources utilized in the study comprise the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), the General Statistics Office (GSO), along with reports from various Non-Governmental Organizations. Materials were sourced from various legislative contexts, including amendments to Vietnam's Land Law, among others. This extensive collection of secondary data provided valuable insights into the historical context and policy background of land reforms, as well as quantitative information regarding economic factors and records of land transactions.

3.3 Data analysis

To evaluate the effects of market-oriented land transfer activities on rural economic outcomes, we employed multiple linear regression analysis. This method allows us to quantify the impact of key institutional and market variables on agricultural productivity and rural household income.

The regression model incorporates three primary independent variables: Land Transaction Volume (LTV), Tenure Security Index (TSI), and Administrative Efficiency Score (AES). The dependent variable Y_i is modeled separately for agricultural productivity and rural income. The econometric specification is given by the following equation:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LTV_i + \beta_2 TSI_i + \beta_3 AES_i + \epsilon_i$$

Where

Y_i : Economic outcome variable

β_0 : Intercept term

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$: Coefficients representing the marginal effect of each predictor

ϵ_i : Error term accounting for random variation

Statistical methods were employed to examine the quantitative data that was gathered. The results were generated through the estimation of econometric models, particularly using multiple

regressions, to analyses how various aspects of land market activities, such as transaction volume, influence economic factors like agricultural productivity per unit area and income levels in rural areas. Several trends and hypotheses emerged, leading to inferences regarding the impact of market-oriented land transfers on the rural economy. Thematic analysis was employed to examine the qualitative materials gathered from interviews and focus group discussions. The process involved examining the data to identify patterns and themes related to governance, tenure security, socio-economic impacts, and the interests that stakeholders have in any land reforms.

By systematically analyzing these themes, the study gained improved insights into the contextual influences on the success of Market Orientated Reforms in Vietnam. This qualitative analysis effectively corroborated the quantitative findings, providing insights into both the outcomes of methodologies for objective assessment and the perceptions and sentiments of the stakeholders affected by the reforms.

3.4 Study area

The This study was conducted across three distinct rural regions in Vietnam, selected for their contrasting socio-economic characteristics, agricultural importance, and differing experiences with land reform implementation. The selected regions include:

- Red River Delta (20.9373° N, 106.3146° E), Located in northern Vietnam, this densely populated region is agriculturally rich and was among the first to adopt market-oriented land reforms. It serves as a benchmark for analyzing long-term policy impacts on agricultural productivity.
- Mekong Delta (10.0452° N, 105.7469° E), Situated in southern Vietnam, this region is vital for national rice production but faces serious environmental challenges, including salinization, flooding, and land erosion. These factors uniquely affect land usage patterns and transfer practices.
- Central Highlands (12.7100° N, 108.2378° E), A mountainous area with a diverse ethnic population, the Central Highlands has undergone recent agricultural expansion and land development. It presents critical insights into land conflict resolution and governance in complex social contexts.

Geographic coordinates are provided to give precise locational context, and regional distinctions are discussed to emphasize why these areas are appropriate for examining the socio-economic, legal, and environmental dynamics of market-oriented land transfers. While a visual map is not included in this version, this section has been expanded to provide clear and relevant geographic orientation for the reader.

This offers a distinct perspective on how geographical considerations influence the outcomes of land reform and the efficacy of market-oriented transfers. Ultimately, the Central Highlands, characterized by recent agricultural growth and land transfer programs, exhibit distinct ethnic group dynamics and land conflict challenges.

Examining this domain is beneficial for understanding the complexities associated with implementing changes in diverse

social and cultural contexts, especially with ethnic minorities and historical animosities stemming from territorial conflicts.

3.5 Ethical considerations

This study adhered to the highest ethical standards, focusing on the ethical treatment of all participants. According to Zhengzhou University's research ethics guidelines, such low-risk social science studies are exempt from formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

All participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential impacts, and they voluntarily consented to participate. Written consent was obtained, with verbal consent documented and witnessed in applicable cases. No minors were included in the study. To ensure anonymity, participants' identities were kept confidential throughout data analysis, and data access was restricted to authorized researchers only.

The study design carefully considered the implications of land transfer policies on potentially vulnerable populations, avoiding any elements that could exacerbate sensitive issues. Researchers engaged with local communities respectfully, using culturally appropriate communication methods suited to each region. This approach helped to uphold the ethical integrity of the study, ensuring accurate and meaningful insights into the dynamics of market-oriented land transfers in rural Vietnam.

4 Market-oriented land transfers in Vietnam

The shaping of land ownership in rural Vietnam is influenced by historical and economic power dynamics. Over the past 10 years, the nation has accelerated the transition of its land transfer system to a market-oriented approach, aligning with the broader goals of liberalization and modernization within the agricultural sector. This shift is crucial for driving rural development, attracting investments, and enhancing productivity across the agricultural value chain. Nonetheless, the process presents complexities stemming from the dual nature of land ownership in Vietnam: while all land is owned by the state, individuals and households possess permitted usage rights that can be bought, sold, rented, mortgaged, or transferred to heirs (LienLe et al., 2024). This leads to a scenario where specific challenges and opportunities arise in the execution of market-oriented reforms.

4.1 Current legal framework

Vietnam has experienced transformations in its land legislation following the implementation of Đổi Mới economic reforms in the late 1980s. Figure 1 Shows the evolution of legal reforms from 1993 to the present and also the future Trends.

The gradual adoption of new structures for land management in the country has been facilitated by significant legal mechanisms for land transfer (Wang et al., 2024). In 1993, a significant transformation occurred in Land Law, enabling individuals to possess the right to utilize land, which included the ability to sell,

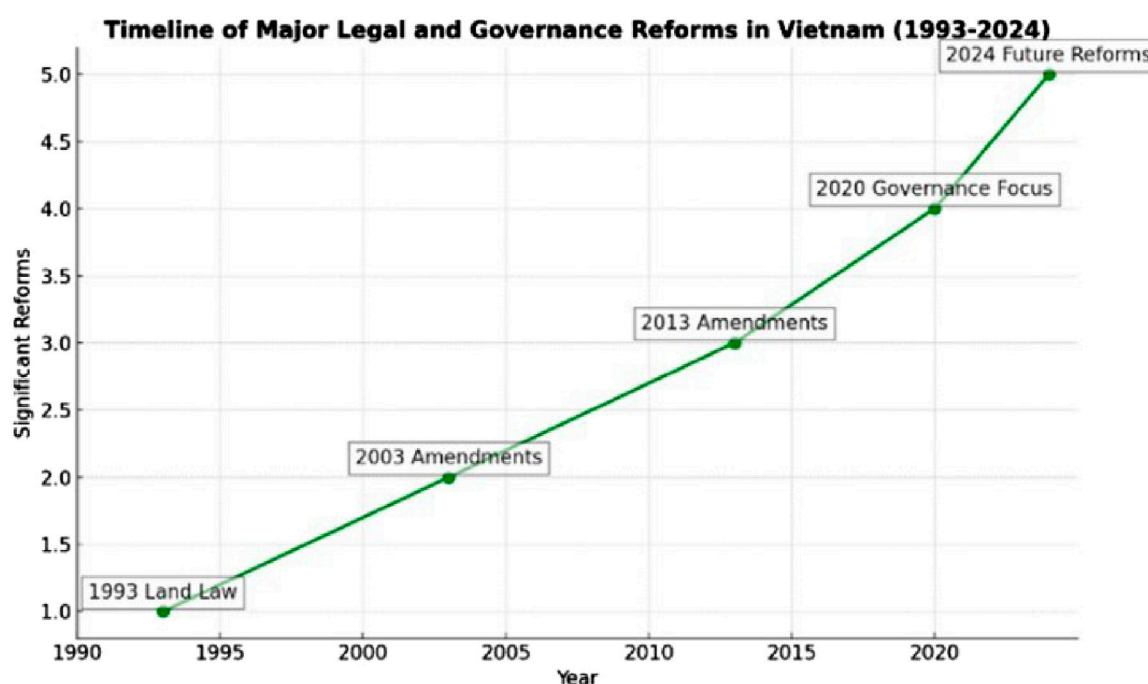


FIGURE 1

The timeline graph shows key legislative and governance advancements in Vietnam from 1993 to 2024, highlighting important changes and initiatives (Figure created by the authors using original data collected during this study. No external copyright permissions required).

rent, mortgage, or transfer this right to other persons or entities. The integration of market principles into land management was established, while it was affirmed that the state retained ultimate ownership of all land (Huyena et al., 2025).

The Amended Land Law, implemented in November 2003, served as a catalyst for legal reforms in Viet Nam's land sector. Commonly referred to as the 2003 law, it aimed to offer clearer specifications regarding land use rights and sought to improve the effectiveness of land management practices. The document outlined a definitive structure regarding the minimum and maximum pricing for land, along with stipulations for compensating landowners when state-owned land is reclaimed by the government. The purpose of these amendments was to enhance legal clarity and refine the organizational strategies within the land market (Li and Zhu, 2024).

In 2013, the Land Law gave land users more legal protections, made it easier for businesses to do business, and made it easier for the state to handle land. This broad reform made it easier for stakeholders to take part in other land-related administrative tasks and improved access to land markets. Under these rules, the state does own all the land, but people or households have a lot of power when they have land usage rights. These rights work a lot like private property rights; the people who have them take part in both land markets and the smart use of land (Koroso and Zevenbergen, 2024).

The legal systems stimulate land markets as a means of encouraging the expansion of economic activity in rural areas. This occurs throughout the process of transferring land use rights among individuals. However, even in the present day, there are still a few obstacles that prevent the successful implementation of these progressive changes in legal restrictions. Land formalization and transfer are time-consuming and

bureaucratic, deterring people from land markets. When rules are applied differently among jurisdictions, administrative inefficiencies are compounded, denying land users a clear working model to operate the system. Conflicts frequently emerge due to the unclear nature of the provisions and regulations concerning land use (Abubakar, 2019). This adds complexity to the overall effectiveness of land transactions involving different users and local government personnel. Such absence of clear direction not only reduces the reliance on the legal framework of land rights but also discouragement of desired market efficiency. Moreover, these ambiguities encourage people to be dubious about investing in land use rights as the state has authority and may take land for public use. Lack of long-term security of farm use rights discourages farmers from investing in land and engaging in active market transactions, which is known as land tenure insecurity (Ma et al., 2024).

4.2 Challenges to implementation

Several significant obstacles have hindered the effective implementation of MOFT in Vietnam, including tenure insecurity, unethical activities within the land sector, social and economic inequalities, and government inefficiencies (de Wit, 2013). Figure 2 shows that the aforementioned significant obstacles were assessed based on their impact levels, with each element utilized to evaluate the complexity of executing the land reforms.

The precarious nature of tenure rights presents a notable issue stemming from the foundational concept of state ownership over all land. This leads to an unstable situation for land-use rights holders, as their rights may be terminated without any form of compensation. The

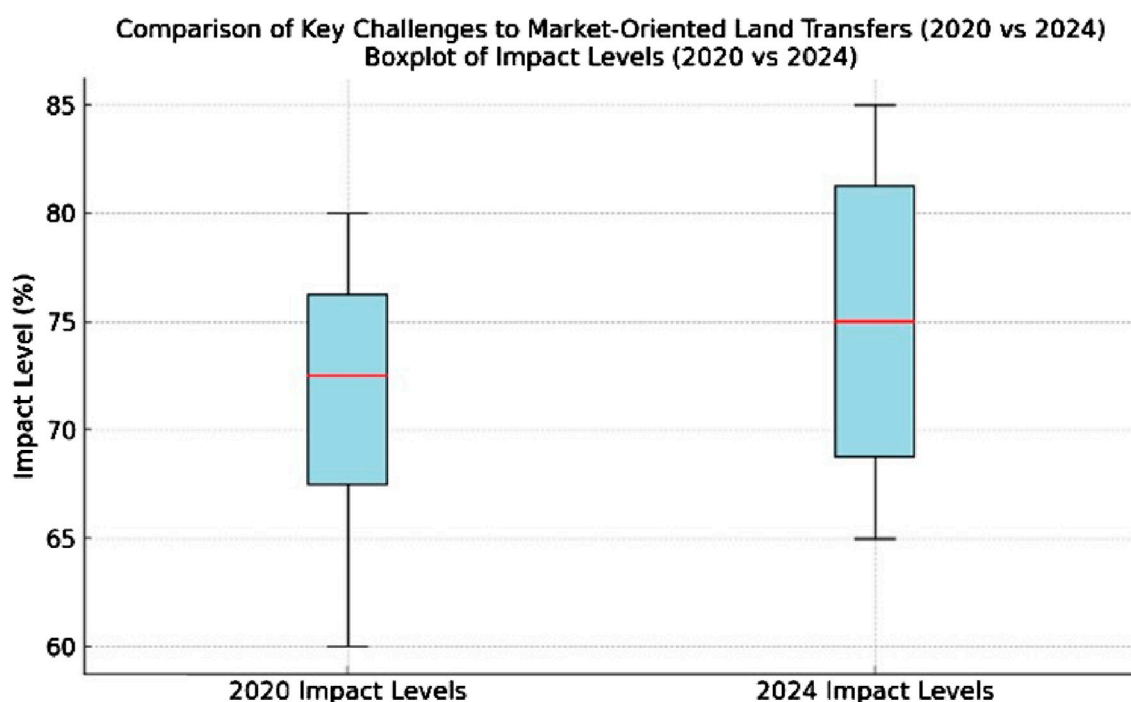


FIGURE 2

Changes in Impact Levels of Significant Challenges to Market-Oriented Land Transfers in Vietnam from 2020 to 2024. The boxplot illustrates a rise in both the median values and variability of the impact levels over this period. This underscores the increasing severity of challenges, with a higher average impact observed in 2024 compared to 2020 (Figure created by the authors using original data collected during this study. No external copyright permissions required).

uncertainty surrounding future land control significantly reduces farmers' willingness to make complex investments or fully engage in markets, creating a vulnerability that hinders agricultural development. This intensifies the circumstances given the existing issues like corruption and governance challenges, among others. Corruption in land administration institutions erodes public trust in the system, resulting in problems like bribery, favoritism, and considerable non-transparent biases related to the valuation and transfer of land, adversely affecting impoverished farmers. These issues obstruct marginalized groups from gaining fair access to markets on shared land, thereby reducing their ability to fully benefit from the changes and perpetuating socioeconomic disparities (Lantz, 2021). Socioeconomic gaps represent a significant obstacle to its realization. The influence of capital, corporations, information, and other forms of power is predominantly exerted by affluent stakeholders in the land market (White et al., 2012).

This may result in what has been naively celebrated as "the concentration of land control" or "the escalation of landlordism," the dispossession of smallholders, and the exacerbation of rural inequalities. The exclusion of lower-income farmers due to their lack of substantial capital has detrimental effects not only on social equality but also on the viability of rural farming communities, exacerbating the growing divide between the affluent and the less fortunate. This is further complicated by the constraints imposed by administrative structures. The absence of clarity in the administrative processes surrounding land transactions poses significant challenges for farmers navigating this sector. The application of laws and regulations is inconsistent, differing from one province to another; this deters individuals from engaging in the

land market and consequently diminishes efficiency. Bureaucratic obstacles can hinder farmers from participating in land transfers, consequently diminishing the potential benefits of market-oriented reforms (Zeng, 2019; Chen, 2014).

Lastly, due to their limited literacy and minimal legal education, rural land users do not fully understand or engage in the land market system. The majority of farmers possess limited understanding regarding their legal options and the processes involved in land transactions. Because of insufficient knowledge, women are unable to defend themselves, negotiate, or advocate for fairness, whether in the workplace, in marriage, or in business; this leaves them vulnerable to further abuse (Agarwal, 2003; Dehaibi, 2024).

Nonetheless, earlier investigations provided a thorough explanation of these individual challenges; however, further exploration is necessary to understand how each of these elements interacts and collectively influences the effectiveness of land reforms. This study aims to address the existing gap by conducting a thorough analysis of the barriers and their implications, with the goal of informing policy measures that can effectively support successful market-oriented land transfers in Vietnam.

4.3 Comparative analysis with other countries

To interpret Vietnam's experience with market-oriented land transfers, it is beneficial to compare it with analogous reforms in other nations, such as China and Rwanda. This was implemented in

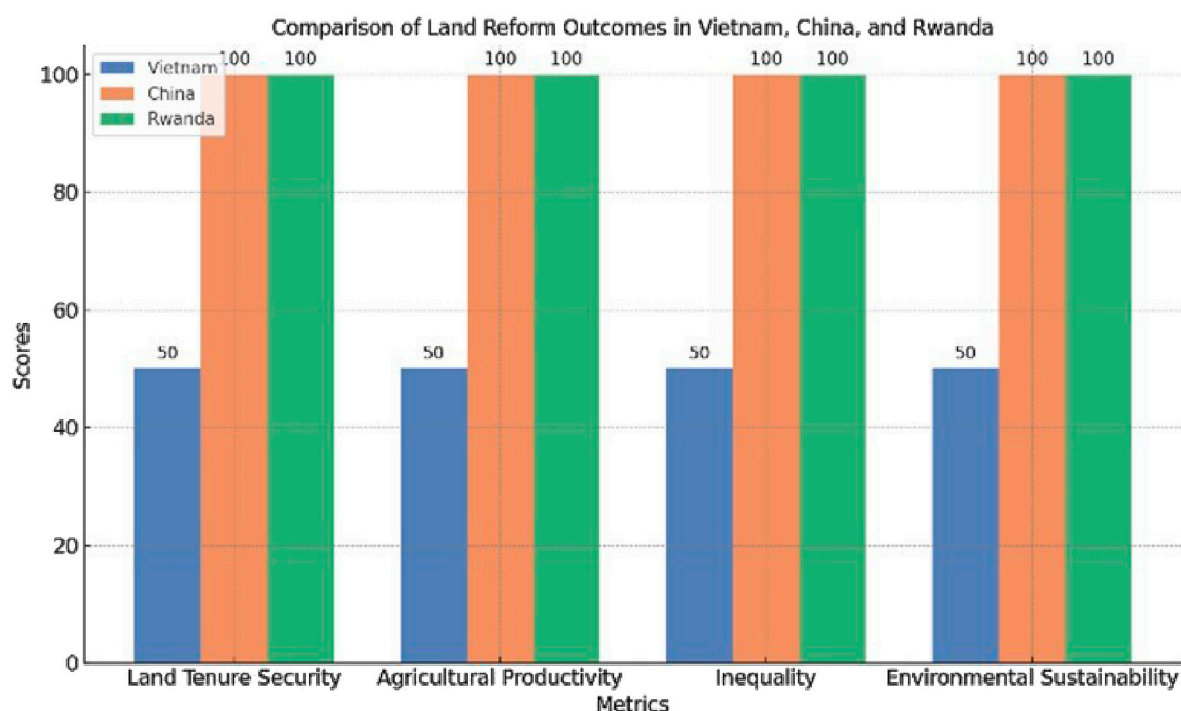


FIGURE 3
Comparative outcomes of land reform across four metrics in Vietnam, China, and Rwanda. Unique colors are used for each country to emphasize the variations among them (Figure created by the authors using original data collected during this study. No external copyright permissions required).

China in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the Chinese established the Household Responsibility System, which allowed households to cultivate land leased to them while maintaining communal ownership (Carter et al., 2024). The GDP experienced significant growth, agriculture productivity and rural incomes improved markedly. However, it resulted in certain adverse consequences, such as the emergence of distorted tenure systems, land fragmentation, and a notable rise in inequities regarding land distribution. The reform of special economic zones in China imparts real significance to the issues while emphasizing both market system efficiency and social justice. In Vietnam's context, it is feasible to draw lessons from China's triumphs and mistakes, implement measures to prevent excessive land fragmentation, provide tenure security, and tackle emerging performance disparities resulting from market-oriented reforms (Mwamba, 2024).

Similarly, Rwanda initiated comprehensive and systematic land reform primarily focused on rights, particularly land rights. A nationwide land registration initiative enhanced tenure security and increased the efficiency of land transactions, hence facilitating economic development. However, obstacles to maintaining these rights and equitable land access for all, as well as preventing elite capture, persist as a concern. Rwanda's experience demonstrates that the most effective countermeasure to insecurity arising from ambiguous land boundaries and management is to ensure the security of tenure (Alhola and Gwaindepi, 2024; Deininger and Goyal, 2024; Jahani et al., 2024).

This strategy emphasizes these areas to maximize Vietnam's benefits from market-oriented land transfers while minimizing negative effects. Figure 3 shows that four major criteria indicate

substantial disparities in land reform results in Vietnam, China, and Rwanda, illustrating the different consequences of land policy in each country.

Consequently, by examining these comparative cases, Vietnam can develop strategies that enhance the effectiveness of market-oriented land transfer methods while simultaneously mitigating the associated efficiency costs of this model. This involves creating policies aimed at improving market efficiency for land, ensuring the full protection of farmer-beneficiaries' rights, and preventing situations where economic growth undermines social justice and sustainability.

5 Impacts of market-oriented land transfers

Vietnam's rural economy, society, and environment are greatly affected by the shift in land transfer from a planned economy system to a market-oriented economy system (Nguyen, 2022b). Yet, there are certain hazards that must be taken into consideration in order to prevent development that is not sustainable in terms of agricultural output and economic growth, even though there are also significant advantages.

5.1 Economic impacts

The market-oriented reforms in Vietnam facilitate a more efficient transfer of land usage rights, thereby enhancing

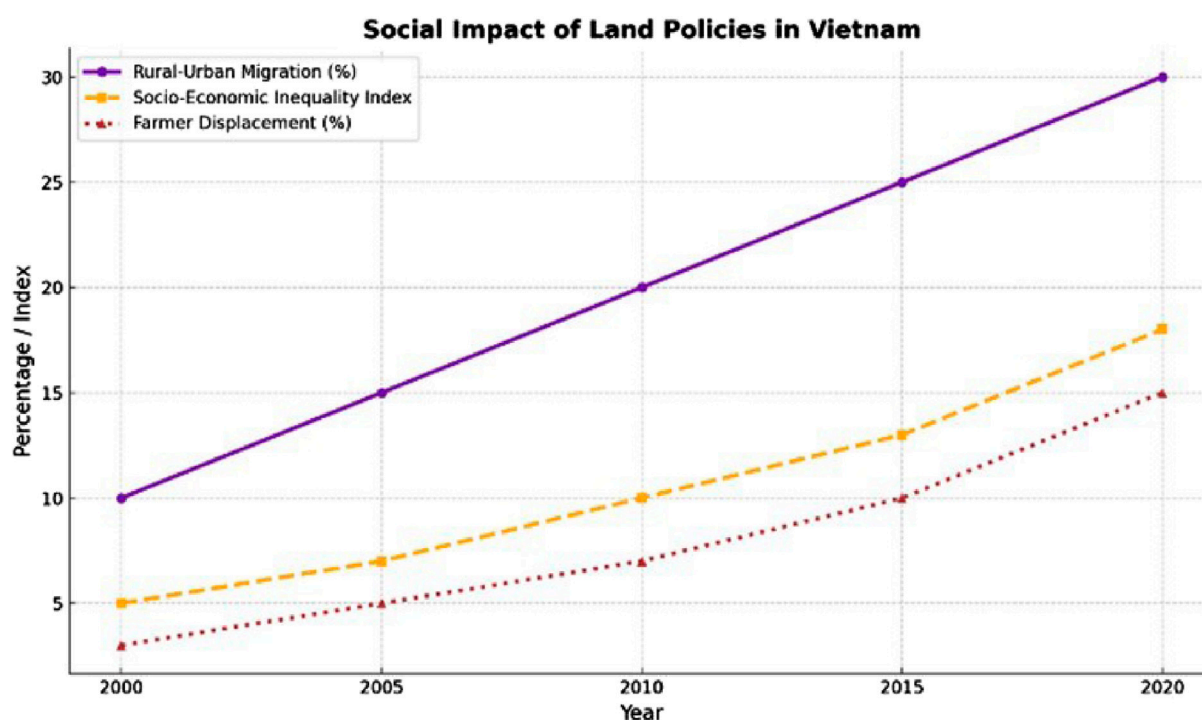


FIGURE 4

This line chart displays the social consequences of land policies in Vietnam between 2000 and 2020, highlighting an increase in rural-urban migration, socio-economic disparity, and the displacement of farmers. Each metric has shown a notable increase over time, underscoring the escalating social challenges associated with these land policies (Figure created by the authors using original data collected during this study. No external copyright permissions required).

investment in agriculture and advancements on the land. The opening of the remaining land for leasing or purchase by farmers enables these reforms to position farmers more favorably, allowing them to achieve economies of scale and enhance efficiency in technology utilization. The positive impacts of these reforms can be evaluated, for instance, through economic efficiency indicators such as agricultural yields, rural income trends, and increased investment in the rural sector (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Figure 4 shows the changes in these areas over the past 20 years. This can enhance the productivity of agricultural products, boost farmers' incomes, and ultimately lead to the growth of the agricultural sector. The ability to buy, sell, and lease land fosters private investments in rural areas, promoting activities such as agribusiness, agro-processing, and the development of physical infrastructure in these regions (Gray and Jones, 2022). The influx of capital has the potential to revolutionize agricultural practices in rural Vietnam, generate job opportunities, and significantly tackle poverty challenges. Additionally, customers benefiting from enhanced land markets can more readily obtain credit, as land-use rights serve as a significant form of collateral for further investment.

The most significant negative in value may be land concentration caused by one firm purchasing the other. Affluent people and organizations use techniques to get funds and key knowledge to buy large swaths of land. This marginalizes smallholder farmers, reduces agricultural competitiveness, and increases rural poverty, undermining the goal of aiding them. The concentration of ownership in private hands hinders

inclusive economic progress and may cause social instability (Wegerif and Guereña, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial for decision-makers to implement measures that prevent the concentration of land ownership in any single area, ensuring that economic growth translates into benefits for all stakeholders in rural communities.

5.2 Social impacts

The ongoing changes in land transfer methods towards a market-driven approach have significant social implications for peasants and rural communities in Viet Nam. The post-reform social inequality trends are illustrated in Figure 4. The promotion of land use rights as commodities means that small farmers who cannot finance themselves to compete in the market may find themselves pressured to sell their land use rights. The displacement of communities results in issues like rural-urban migration, which strains urban facilities and services while simultaneously destabilizing traditional rural societies (Yang and Loopmans, 2023). In addition to the economic activity diminishing the productive resource base, it also erodes individuals' cultural, social, and community connections, organizations, and relationships (Kay, 2014).

Market-oriented adjustment techniques may increase socioeconomic inequality between rural rich and destitute. The growing income gap and hardships of poor farmers highlight four main issues caused by bigger farmers and companies buying more land than they can farm (Mazzolini, 2016).

Environmental Impacts of Market-Oriented Land Reforms

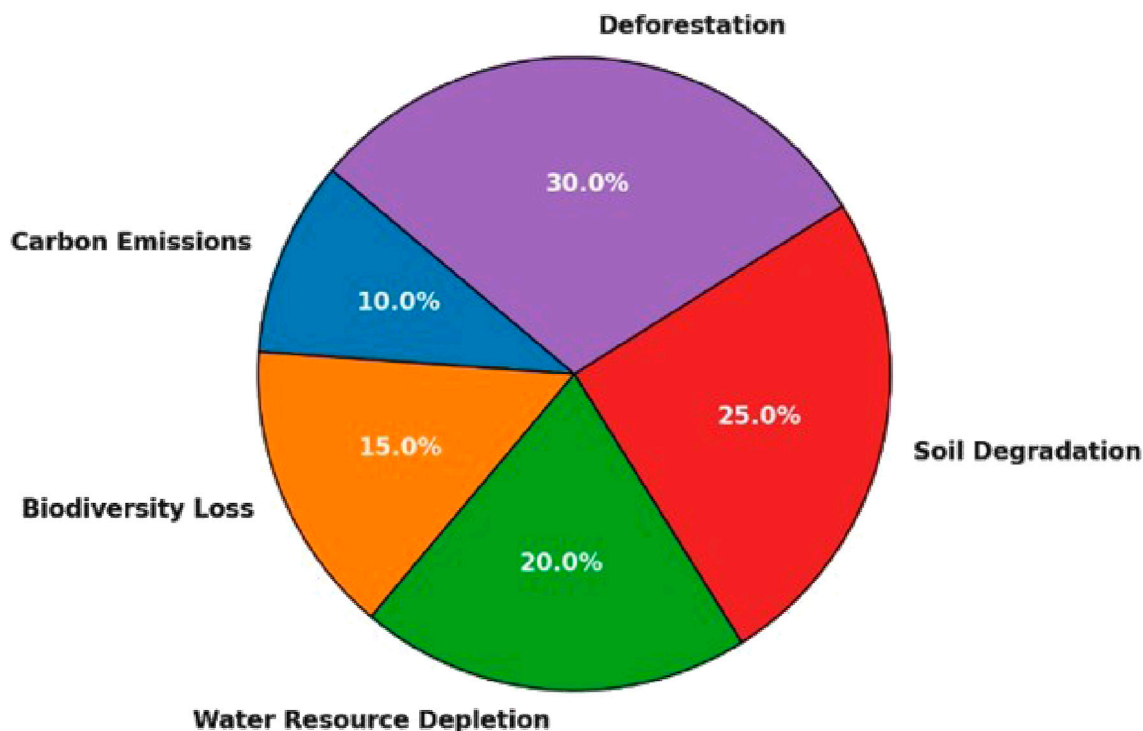


FIGURE 5

This pie chart presents an analysis of the environmental consequences associated with market-oriented land reforms, emphasizing deforestation, soil degradation, depletion of water resources, loss of biodiversity, and carbon emissions (Figure created by the authors using original data collected during this study. No external copyright permissions required).

The propensity may lead to societal problems, mobility constraints, and resource conflicts. Increased socioeconomic disparities undermine sustainable growth and may result in future social difficulties. Understanding land ownership changes and their impact on rural social dynamics is critical. External investors that convert community property to commercial use may affect politics, authority structures, and social relationships. It erodes communal support and solidarity, which are essential for rural growth. Rural communities must collaborate to address economic and environmental issues, yet altering their social structure may impede collaboration (Zhou, 2024; Syaban and Appiah-Opoku, 2024).

5.3 Environmental impacts

The transfer of land with a focus on market dynamics in Vietnam presents potential environmental implications, encompassing both beneficial and detrimental effects. However, on the favorable side of financial liberalization, these reforms could lead to beneficial effects on the efficient and sustainable utilization of land (Dinh and Wesseler, 2024; LienLe et al., 2024). Additionally, this indicates that farmers are positioned to adopt modern advanced farming techniques, enhance land management, and invest their resources in sustainable agricultural practices. If the correct legal laws are in place for the consolidation, it can improve an organization's ability to use its resources, boost productivity, and

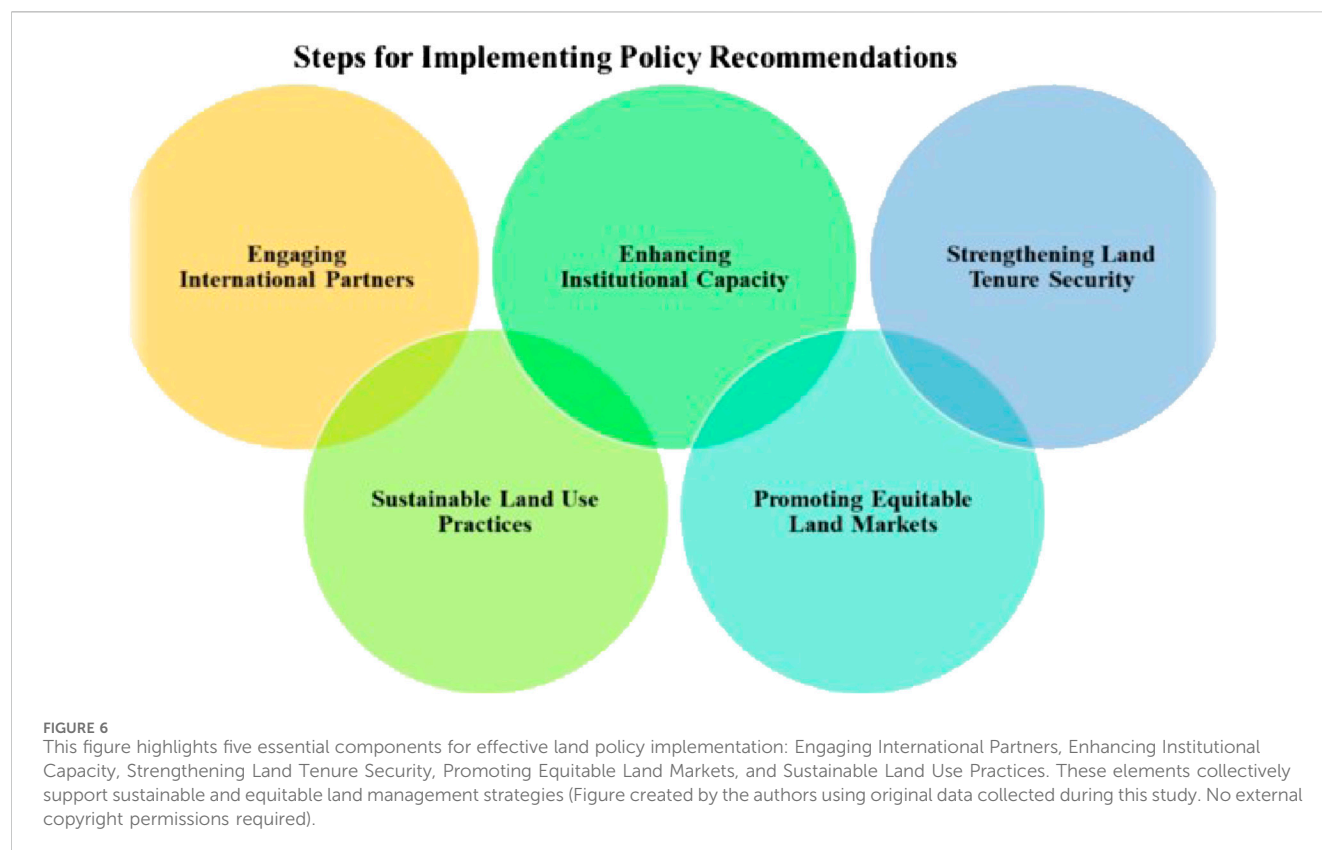
potentially have a good impact on the environment. Intensive land use enhances agricultural food production and positively contributes to the conservation of natural resources. The significant environmental impacts observed are comprehensively depicted in Figure 5.

As previously noted, however, market activity could degrade land resources if it is unregulated by environmental laws. Traditional agricultural development methods that prioritize production over soil health, deforestation, product quality, and water resources may lead to unsustainable practices. Developing regions like the Mekong delta may face environmental issues that may be exacerbated by increased agricultural output (Nguyen and Espagne, 2024).

Additionally, irresponsible land use reduces greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration. Forests and wetlands converted to farmland increase climate change vulnerability in ecosystems and rural regions. Climate resilience must be included into land management policies. These climate change hazards may be mitigated by reducing emissions and improving well carbon sequestration (Tsaiyu, 2024).

5.4 Results from focus group discussions

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with farmers, local administrators, and rural development stakeholders revealed several



recurring concerns that shape their experiences with market-oriented land transfers. Participants frequently cited tenure insecurity, often described as a “fear of unexpected land loss,” which discouraged long-term investment and planning. Administrative corruption emerged as a major concern, with respondents mentioning favoritism, bribery, and lack of transparency in land valuation and transactions. Additionally, socio-economic inequalities were reported to significantly limit smallholder farmers’ ability to compete in the land market, especially in regions where larger corporate actors are present. These qualitative findings complement the quantitative analysis and highlight the need for participatory, transparent, and equitable reform strategies.

6 Policy implications

The market-oriented transfer of rural collective land in Vietnam represents a significant phenomenon, presenting numerous opportunities alongside certain challenges for the socio-economic development of the country (LienLe et al., 2024; Migheli, 2024).

The market-oriented transfer of rural collective land in Vietnam represents a significant phenomenon, presenting numerous opportunities alongside certain challenges for the socio-economic development of the country.

For land market reforms to be initiated, accomplished, and sustained effectively, it is essential that the following policy considerations be deemed crucial. The flowchart in Figure 6 illustrates the process of implementing these recommendations, starting from the acquisition of land rights and extending to the engagement of international community partners.

6.1 Strengthening land tenure security

Farmers seeking to invest in productivity improvement and actively participate in the land market must ensure the stability of land tenure rights. Instances necessitating the simplicity of a nation’s legal codes can be addressed by eliminating several obstacles through the streamlining of property ownership registration and transfer processes (Ha, 2024).

This would aid in resolving disputes and misconceptions regarding land ownership among districts throughout various regions due to fraudulent land regulations. The enhancement of technology and accessibility to popular services for rural populations is facilitated by local offices and online presence. Enhancing rural populations’ awareness of their rights and procedures may empower farmers to improve their livelihoods, prevent exploitation by market elites, and engage comprehensively in land markets (Ha, 2024; Feir et al., 2024).

6.2 Combating corruption in land administration

Corruption in the land administration system undermines the efficacy of land reforms and diminishes public trust, while the advancement of tenure security is hindered by bureaucratic delays (Deininger and Goyal, 2024; Adusei, 2024). In the present setting, enhancing transparency and accountability is considered the optimal approach for this issue. The implementation of digital application technologies in registration conveyancing and the

maintenance of land transaction records might mitigate instances of corrupt practices (Abraham and Jerry, 2023).

This ensures that the data is accessible in real-time, maintains accurate record-keeping, and imposes limitations on discretionary decisions made by officials, thereby minimizing opportunities for bribery. Independent entities or strengthening the current system of checks and balances can aid in the effective enforcement of land laws. Implementing auditing measures, controlling processes, and offering whistle-blower protection, along with training officials on ethical standards, contributes significantly to core reduction (Lakshmi et al., 2024).

6.3 Promoting equitable land markets

Improper actions in the execution of land administration hinder the effectiveness of land reforms and diminish trust in the reform process. This indicates that the policies must ensure equity, thereby preventing larger groups within rural communities from experiencing polarization and exclusion (Chavunduka and Tsikira, 2024).

Land redistribution efforts that provide smallholder farmers subsidized or leased land for agriculture have been successful. This reduces aristocratic land holdings and boosts rural economies. Rural farmers may finance land purchase and improvements using affordable credit and financial services, decreasing land market inequities. Establishing land acquisition limits, minimum lot sizes, and other regulations to prevent companies from monopolizing the production capabilities of small farmers and rural residents can boost policy backing and protect vulnerable groups.

6.4 Promoting sustainable land use and environmental protection

To reduce the environmental impact of market-oriented land transfers, promote sustainable land use and environmental conservation. Sustainability in land management requires environmental protection and legislation that support sustainable farming practices and policies to reduce environmental damage. Key measures include environmental impact studies, especially for large-scale land purchase, compliance, and penalties for non-compliance. Tax advantages, subsidies, technical help, and certification systems that provide sustainable farmers an edge may promote sustainable investment (Dragan et al., 2024).

6.5 Enhancing institutional capacity and governance

The formulation of these policy ideas necessitates effective institutions and robust governance. In order to improve service delivery, it is also advised that funds be allocated to the government's agencies responsible for physical planning, land administration, environmental management, and rural development by way of training and equipment. Coordinating policies among agencies ensures uniform implementation, while establishing monitoring and evaluation methods facilitates ongoing assessment of policy

effectiveness regarding land, allowing for required modifications. Strengthening institutional capacity ensures that policies are not merely theoretical but also practicable (Qu et al., 2024; Cardey et al., 2024).

6.6 Engaging international partners

Vietnam can benefit from the support of international partners in various ways by obtaining direct expert opinions on how other nations have navigated similar challenges and gaining access to international funding for projects related to land administration modernization and environmental protection. Collaborating with international organizations and experts enhances Vietnam's capacity to effectively implement reforms in land policies and address the challenging issues previously mentioned. The worldwide involvement can introduce (Thi et al., 2024) concepts, resources, and innovations that are essential for transformation on a broader scale. By implementing these policy recommendations, VNM can effectively address the challenges associated with Market Orientated Land Transfers, thereby fostering sustainable and inclusive rural development. Additional strategies that ought to be implemented encompass enhancing land rights, curbing corruption, acknowledging equity, and ensuring non-restriction to the environment as essential approaches to fully realize the benefits of land reforms (Forse et al., 2024).

As a result, a comprehensive approach that encompasses legal, economic, social, gender, and environmental dimensions will underpin Vietnam's development of a progressive rural economy, ensuring the interests of all parties are safeguarded.

7 Discussion

The transition to market-oriented practices in the transfer of rural collective land in Vietnam holds significant potential for transforming the rural economy substantially. Upon transitioning from collective tenures to market-oriented systems, the farmer is more capable of appropriating and managing his land effectively.

This alteration has the potential to stimulate private sector investment, introduce advanced technology, and enhance farming techniques, ultimately leading to increased agricultural productivity and higher income levels for farmers. Additionally, they improve access to credit and various financial services, as land use rights can be used as collateral. Consequently, they contribute to reducing poverty, enhancing food supply, and fostering integrated socioeconomic development in the impacted rural regions.

Proper management and policies that are implemented are essential to ensure that these benefits are distributed in a way that minimizes the risks associated with each and triggers its expenses aspect.

Issues like the possibility of a consolidation of land ownership may once more work against small farmers and exacerbate rural inequality. The relocation of these vulnerable groups could lead to rural-urban encroachment, exerting pressure on urban infrastructure and potentially overshadowing traditional tribal aggregations. Increased land usage without sufficient conservation may result in socioeconomic difficulties such as soil erosion, the loss of agricultural land due to deforestation, and a decline in biodiversity.

Addressing these issues necessitates, firstly, enhancing land tenure security; secondly, implementing legal reforms; thirdly, combating corruption in land management and governance; fourthly, ensuring equitable access to the land market; fifthly, integrating environmental considerations into land management strategies; and finally, strengthening the institutional framework.

Additional support may be obtained from international organizations through technical collaboration and benchmarking. If Vietnam proactively addresses these difficulties, it may leverage market-oriented land transfers to promote sustainable economic growth, social equity, and environmental conservation.

7.1 Key findings

This research reveals that despite Vietnam's legislative efforts to facilitate market-oriented land transfers, significant challenges persist. Land tenure insecurity remains a major issue, hindering farmers from making long-term investments and engaging actively in land markets. Corruption within land administration undermines the integrity and fairness of land transactions, disproportionately affecting smallholder farmers who lack resources to combat such practices. Socio-economic disparities limit underprivileged groups' access to land markets, exacerbating inequality and hindering equitable rural development. Comparative analysis with China's reforms highlights the need for Vietnam to integrate social, economic, and environmental considerations into its market reforms to avoid issues like land fragmentation and rising inequality. The study emphasizes that while market-oriented land transfers offer opportunities for rural advancement, careful management is essential to ensure benefits are distributed equitably without worsening societal disparities or environmental degradation.

8 Conclusion

The market-oriented transfer of collectively owned rural land represents a significant step in Vietnam's comprehensive strategy for rural development and economic modernization. By enhancing the efficiency of land transfer and utilization, these reforms have the potential to generate substantial economic benefits for rural communities across the country. This study has demonstrated that while there is considerable potential in market-oriented transfers to facilitate land transactions, realizing this potential hinge on effectively addressing challenges related to tenure security, governance, equity, and environmental impact. Securing protected land rights is essential to empower farmers to make informed investments in their land, thereby increasing agricultural productivity. An organized and clearly defined system of land tenure reduces ambiguity, mitigates disputes, and facilitates better medium-to long-term planning. Addressing corruption and enhancing transparency in land management are also critical. Transparent land operations ensure fair transactions and instill confidence among all stakeholders, which is fundamental for the effective functioning of the market. While the introduction of land markets offers numerous advantages, it is imperative to ensure

that smallholder farmers can effectively participate in a competitive market environment. Developing policies aimed at addressing socio-economic imbalances such as providing financial subsidies, credit facilities, or legal aid is necessary to prevent further advantages accruing to already privileged groups.

Furthermore, implementing sustainable land-use practices is crucial for promoting healthy ecosystems. Short-term increases in agricultural productivity should not come at the expense of long-term environmental sustainability. Integrating environmental considerations into national land management policies can aid in conserving natural resources, a critical factor in combating climate change. By navigating these challenges, Vietnam can optimize resource utilization in its rural land system, ensuring sustainable agricultural productivity. This approach will enhance social equity and contribute to environmental preservation, thereby improving the living standards of rural populations and bolstering the national economy. Future research should focus on examining the impacts of market-oriented land reforms in Vietnam, which remain largely unexplored yet hold the potential to transform rural livelihoods, social relations, and the natural environment. Advancing this area of study will significantly enhance our understanding of how market-related reforms can be tailored for rural regions in developing nations, fostering economic growth while being mindful of social equity and environmental sustainability.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Author contributions

NT: Writing – original draft. ZC: Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Writing – original draft. TZ: Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft.

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