Recent increases in demand for agricultural land has fuelled academic, as well as public, interest in the potential effects of high value agricultural land, particularly in developing countries. The dominating question seems to be: will increasing demand for agricultural land imply land grabbing or rural development? This article finds empirical support for a proposed theory which suggests that the extent of agricultural rent-seeking, in the form of large-scale land acquisitions, is determined by the relative political power of an elite and a farmer group. © 2014 Taylor & Francis.