
Smallholder Agriculture and Livelihood Sustainability Potentials among Rural Households: A Case of Sunflower Value Chain in Tanzania

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Abstract

Sunflower cultivation has attracted the majority of smallholder farmers who have dominated the production node of the value chain. The chain activities have become the main income stream to households and thus increasing livelihood sustainability potentials. However, in some cases smallholder farmers only end up with minimal benefits since the markets are not stabilized to their advantage. As a result, the market practices continue to leave smallholder farmers exposed to livelihood stresses and shocks which affect their potentials for livelihood sustainability. Therefore, the study aimed to analyze the impact of sunflower value chain activities on livelihood sustainability potentials among households of smallholder farmers. A cross-sectional design was adopted to guide the study along with counterfactual approach to establish the hypothesised impact. A sample size of 368 respondents was used including participant and non-participant smallholder farmers and data was collected using questionnaire, key informant interview and focus group discussion. Quantitative data were analysed by using descriptive statistics and propensity score matching while qualitative data were transcribed and thereafter analysed using constant comparison technique. The findings show that most of the households had lower chances for livelihood sustainability (67.1%) while few households (12.5%) were categorised into high livelihood sustainability. The differences were attributable to one's engagement in sunflower production which had an impact on livelihood sustainability as observed by the differences from propensity scores matching ($MD = 1.394$; $t = 6.98$ at $p = 0.000$). It was concluded that sunflower value chain is potential towards households' livelihood sustainability unlike any other socio-economic activities as it enabled smallholder farmers to withstand livelihood shocks and stresses based on the generated household income.

Keywords: Agriculture, Smallholder Farmers, Livelihood, Sustainability.

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INTRODUCTION

Smallholder farming alone constitutes approximately 80% of all farms in Sub-Saharan Africa and employs about 175 million people directly (AGRA, 2014) within the rural population. It provides a livelihood for the multitudes of small-scale producers (OECD-FAO, 2016). Thus, developing smallholder agriculture can reduce extreme poverty and starvation among households in Sub-Saharan Africa since they do not have many economic opportunities. Despite of the

observed potentials, smallholder farmers continue to face poverty and food insecurity emanating from low production as a result of a number of factors including poor technologies involving the use of poor seeds (World Bank, 2013); climate change and variability (Thompson, Berrang-Ford and Ford, 2010) as well as low commercialization of agricultural products (Delaney, Livingston and Schonberger, 2011).

In Tanzania, agriculture remains the main source of economic livelihood for about 66%