EMERGING LAND ISSUES IN AFRICAN AGRICULTURE AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Background and Motivation

International Food Policy Research Institute
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Motivation

1. Observation that Boserup theory may be wanting....
Motivation

2. Conflicting perceptions about land availability in SSA

3. Estimates to date on unutilized arable land are admittedly crude:
   - e.g., Fisher-Shah estimate 201 million ha (40% of world total) in SSA, though highly concentrated in 5 countries.
   - How accurate are those estimates?
   - Sensitive to assumptions?
   - Many important private / public decisions hinge on this estimate
Motivation

4. Recent advances in merging detailed information on 1 km\(^2\) pixels with farm survey data
   - Opens up possibility of new analysis linking localized population density to
     - Input demand / land intensification
     - farm productivity
     - household welfare.
Proposal for special issue of *Food Policy*

1. *5 African case studies*
2. *2 Asian case studies*
3. *Cross-country analysis to assess the ways in which rural communities are responding to rising pop density*
4. *Assessment of unutilized land in SSA*
5. *Land and water issues*
6. *Mechanization and intensification*
7. *Rise of Emergent farmers*
8. *Land tenure issues in Africa – cross country review of 9 countries*
Salient research questions

1. How are rural communities and farming systems responding/adapting to rising population density and land constraints?
   - Land intensification
   - Migration?
   - Diversification into off-farm employment?
   - Fertility rates?
   - Other routes?
Salient research questions

2. Unutilized vs. unclaimed land – policy significance?

3. Smallholder-led vs. large/commercial-led development? Synergies or trade-offs?
4. Appropriate rural development strategies for densely populated rural areas?
   • Is the Johnston/Mellor structural transformation process still the future for SSA?
   • If not, then how?
Let’s be like Wayne Gretsky
Bivariate relationship between Farm Size and Total HH Income

Note: The vertical lines are drawn at 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles of per capita land owned for each country. The top 5 percent of observations are excluded from the graphs because lines are sensitive to a few extreme cases.
Descriptive statistics suggest households being “pushed” into off-farm activities.