



Youths' participation in agricultural intensification in Tanzania

SAIRLA Research Briefing

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At a glance

Tanzania has one of the world's youngest population with 45 per cent being under the age of 15, and 35 per cent between the ages of 15-35. In addition, the annual population growth rate is high –3.1 per cent – which suggest the population will double in less than 25 years.

This research presents a contrasting picture regarding youths' participation in agriculture intensification between the two regions of Iringa and Morogoro. Surveys on maize yields and generational data from Iringa Region indicate that youths are more affected by decreased yields than the middle and older generations. A contrasting picture is presented in Morogoro region, where young farmers have had the highest rice yields since the start of the data collection in 2000.

In this briefing we trace maize and rice yields over time to understand young peoples' participation in agricultural intensification processes in Iringa and Morogoro regions. The findings presented here are based on research carried out as part of the Afrint IV project 'Equity and Institutions in Sustainable African Intensification' – a project designed to analyse patterns of smallholder intensification in Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia. The study is based on longitudinal quantitative data in which around 400 households have been surveyed and revisited in four data collection rounds during 2002, 2008, 2013 and 2018. The quantitative data was complemented with qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with youths from four villages, two for each region. These interviews and focus group discussions included both youth who are heading their own household as well as who are still living in a household headed by their parents or other older relatives. In total, 43 qualitative interviews and seven focus group discussions were conducted.

The importance of agriculture and the dual perceptions of young people

The National Youth Development Policy, the National Agriculture Policy and the National Strategy for Youth Involvement in Agriculture recognise the importance of the agricultural sector for the economy and its crucial role in improving living standards and alleviating poverty. Youth are considered to play a key role in the socio-economic development of Tanzania. However they are also recognised as a vulnerable group because of limited livelihood opportunities and the negative perceptions of others about them. While the current youth cohort is better educated than their parents, increasing access to education has not been followed by an expansion of employment opportunities (White, 2012) and there is currently a strong mismatch between newly created jobs in Tanzania and the number of young individuals who enter the labour market annually (URT, 2016).





Findings

Trends in youth-headed production

Finding 1: Youth-headed households are particularly affected by decreasing farm size

The longitudinal data suggests that youth headed households have had the smallest farm size during all four phases of data collection. Moreover, farm size has decreased among all age cohorts during data collection, but youth headed households have been disproportionately affected with a decrease in farm size from 1.72 ha in 2000 to 1.36 ha in 2018. Nevertheless, in the qualitative interviews, several respondents emphasised that labour and input costs involved in farming additional land were beyond their means, and as such they considered their existing farm size to be sufficient.

Finding 2: There are regional variations to youth's participation in intensified farming

Young people appear to have been sidelined in the process of maize intensification, Our data on maize yields suggest that youths were part of agricultural intensification between the first and second rounds of data collection but that they have become more marginalised over time. While maize yields rose for the sample as a whole, starting at 936 kg/ha for the 2000-2002 growing seasons to 1338 kg/ha for the 2016-2018 seasons, the corresponding figures for youth were 987 kg/ha and 881 kg/ha respectively. The explanation for their lack of involvement, however may also lie in falling farm sizes, a preference for higher value horticultural crops as well as larger involvement in the non-farm sector.

Youths play a central role in the production of rice in Morogoro. Although all three age cohorts have been part of the intensification process concerning rice since the beginning of data collection, young people have the highest rice yields in all four data collection rounds. On average, rice yields rose from 1520 kg/ha for the 2000-2002 growing seasons, to 2391 kg/ha for the 2016-2018 growing seasons. Youth increased their yields even more, from 1636 kg/ha to 2917 kg/ha during the same period.

The difference in yields per age group between the two crops is related to markets as well as access to technology. Rice production in Morogoro requires less purchased inputs (particularly artificial fertiliser), yet is challenged by the need for substantial weeding. By using their own labour and purchasing fewer inputs such as herbicides, young people are able to attain higher yields than for maize, despite being challenged by lacking capital.

Barriers to youth access

Finding 3: Young people's access to agricultural inputs and technology varies regionally

With regards to agricultural inputs such as chemical fertilizer and improved seeds, and technology there is a clear division between Iringa and Morogoro regions. Compared to the middle and older generations, youths in Iringa Region lack access to inputs and technology. By contrast, in Morogoro region youths are clearly participating in the modernization of farming.

Finding 4: Youth struggle to access the resources and finance needed to engage in intensified farming

Interviews with young farmers from both regions suggest that the main obstacles are a lack of capital, tools and agricultural machinery and poor market access, since they lack credentials (e.g. collateral) to borrow from formal institution. Even informal and local institutions regard young people as too high risk and are cautious to lend to them.



Finding 5: Young people struggle to take up the advice given

Advice provided by extension officers are to a large extent neglected by the youths, as the advice implies high costs for agricultural inputs and the youths are financially constrained.

Finding 6: Contrary to urban migration trends that suggest otherwise, youths want to stay in rural areas

Despite the challenges related to engaging in intensified farming, only a few respondents said they wanted to leave the villages, on the contrary, they noticed villagers who had previously left but are now returning due to the hard life faced in urban areas.

Conclusions and recommendations

Our data shows that large regional variations exist regarding youths' participation in the intensification process. Youth play a central role in the modernization and intensification of rice farming in Morogoro region, while being excluded from the intensification process of maize farming in Iringa region. The regional variations are visible both in terms of yields as well as agricultural inputs.

Longitudinal data furthermore shows that the average land size has decreased among smallholder farmers, and that this is impacting on youth headed households in particular. Apart from access to land, the main obstacles for participating in farming identified by the younger generation were lack of tools, machinery, and access to markets.

Few respondents said they wished to leave the rural areas. Policies relating to young people therefore need to consider how to improve the livelihood opportunities for the rural youth.

- Young people farm smaller plots of land and are affected by falling land sizes to a greater extent than other age groups. Policies need to focus on improving productivity on this land and increasing intensification.
- Lack of credit prevents youth engagement with extension services – rural credit schemes that target inputs for youth in particular can help address this.
- In some areas, youth have a higher interest in horticultural rather than traditional staple crops because they are more lucrative. Extension advice needs to be given for a variety of crops to encourage a productive use of limited land.
- Because their farm sizes are small and shrinking, young people need to combine agricultural income sources with non-farm incomes. Youth therefore need training and skills in non-agriculture related businesses.
- Initiatives to retain youth in rural areas must focus on creating opportunities through infrastructure and access to markets.



Further reading

Andersson Djurfeldt, A., Hillbom, E. and Msuya, E. (2019) 'Ricing fortunes – agricultural growth, farm intensification and paddy specialization in two Tanzanian villages', in Brockington, D., and Noe, C., (eds) *Assets, Prosperity and Rural Livelihoods. Insights from Longitudinal Studies in Tanzania*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Government of Tanzania (URT) (2007) *National Youth Development Policy*, Dar es Salaam: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth Development

Government of Tanzania (URT) (2013) *National Agricultural Policy*, Dar es Salaam: Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives

Government of Tanzania (URT) (2016) *National Strategy for Youth Involvement in Agriculture (NSYIA) 2016-2021*, Dodoma: Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries

White, B. (2012) 'Agriculture and the Generation Problem: Rural Youth, Employment and the Future of Farming', *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 43, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

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About Afrint IV

Afrint IV – Equity and Institutions in Sustainable African Intensification – is implemented by the Department of Human Geography at Lund University in cooperation with the University of Malawi, Sokoine University of Agriculture, the University of Zambia and LUCSUS. It is supported by the Sustainable Agricultural Intensification Research and Learning in Africa programme (SAIRLA). For more information about Afrint IV see <https://sairla-africa.org/what-we-do/research/policy-for-equity-in-african-agriculture-afrint-iv>

About SAIRLA

SAIRLA is a UK Department for International Development funded initiative that seeks to address one of the most intractable problems facing small-holder farmers in Africa – how to engage in the market economy and to deliver sustainable intensification of agriculture which avoids negative impacts on the environment. The programme is managed by WYG International Ltd and the Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich. For more information visit www.sairla-africa.org