SOCIAL DIFFERENCES IN THE VULNERABILITY AND ADAPTATION PATTERNS AMONG SMALLHOLDER FARMERS: EVIDENCE FROM LAWRA DISTRICT IN THE UPPER WEST REGION OF GHANA

It is important to understand the impact that social status (associated with gender and age) has on farmer vulnerability and willingness to adopt adaptation measures in Ghana.

KEY FINDINGS

We found that vulnerability among social groups was largely dependent on gender and age. When asked to rank risks for smallholder farmers, men ranked drought, soil fertility and inputs as the most pressing risks, while women ranked drought, water stress and food security as the greatest risks. This means that efforts to reduce vulnerability and improve the wellbeing of smallholder farmers should be targeted at an individual level.

In relation to adaptation choices, we found that people differ significantly in their adoption of sustainable land management practices, including using compost and changing planting dates. Regarding the use of modern inputs, women use improved varieties more often than men.

KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

To reduce vulnerability of farmers, development interventions should focus on reducing vulnerability to drought through the provision of accurate and timely rainfall information. Soil fertility enhancement strategies that include precise applications of agro-chemicals should be promoted. Organisations should improve access to credit to eliminate or reduce problems associated with inputs purchase. The Savannah Agricultural Research Institute (SARI) should develop drought-resistant crop varieties that are suitable to local conditions and that address the socio-cultural aspirations of farmers.

To promote climate-smart agriculture in Ghana’s northern savannah zone, and to sustain and improve policy adoption, policies should work to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of sustainable land management strategies. Specific interventions should be targeted at improving water-harvesting techniques among smallholder farmers in the Lawra district to help reduce vulnerability to drought – identified by all social groups as the most pressing hazard.


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