



Tropentag, September 18-21, 2016, Vienna, Austria

“Solidarity in a competing world —
fair use of resources”

Challenges and Prospects of Farm and Non-Farm Livelihood Strategies of Smallholder Farmers in Yayu Biosphere Reserve, Ethiopia. A Qualitative Analysis

BENEBERU ASSEFA WONDIMAGEGNHU¹, SARAH NISCHALKE², MULUNESH ABEBE ALEBACHEW¹,
TINA BEUCHELT²

¹*Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), Ethiopia*

²*University of Bonn, Center for Development Research (ZEF), Germany*

Abstract

The study aimed at analysing the challenges and prospects of farm and non-farm livelihood strategies of smallholder farmers taking Yayu Biosphere reserve in Ethiopia as a case study site. 28 focus group discussions, 6 key informant interviews, and participant observation were employed to collect in depth gender disaggregated qualitative data from four sampled sites. Data was analysed by summarising narrations and further doing triangulations to explain and justify findings of the research in the course of analysis. The research found out that farming remains an important livelihood strategy among smallholder farmers despite facing a number of challenges. The findings indicated that farming is a demanding job with challenges such as low price for commodities, inaccessibility and unaffordability of agricultural inputs, fragmentation of farmland as a result of population pressure, wild animals' attacks and crop diseases. In addition, non-farm activities such as petty trade, daily labour, local brewery, low-skill formal employment, firewood and charcoal sale, food preparation and sale, handicraft, carpentry and rendering transportation services were found to be the main non-farm livelihood diversification strategies. However, the study found out that these activities are not common among land owners and have long been anticipated to be “low-skill” and “low-paying” jobs. Land owners involve in these activities as a coping mechanism during adverse conditions and to cover minor expenditures of their families particularly during off-seasons where there is no active agricultural activity. On the contrary, non-farm activities are found to be the main livelihood strategies for landless households along with sharecropping. The findings show that farmers lack other better livelihood alternatives, and they are losing hope in taking up farming as a main means of livelihood due to the challenges they are facing on farming. This has created a gloomy feature on the future prospects of farming and calls for the urgency of integrated development interventions. These include interventions that focus on improving the resource management capacity of smallholder farmers and reducing pressure on land by designing capacity building programs to enable them fit to better paying non-farm employment opportunities.

Keywords: Farm livelihoods, income diversification, non-farm livelihoods