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HIV/AIDS Impacts on Commercial-orientation in Home Garden Cultivation: A Case Study of Rural Ghana

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Abstract

Recent studies on home gardens have focused on their potential in enhancing food security in rural households in HIV/AIDS affliction. Their role in contributing to cash income has received relatively limited research attention. This study assessed the extent of variations and similarities in crop species composition and diversity, availability of products and external inputs used in commercial and non-commercial home gardens managed by rural households in HIV/AIDS and non-HIV/AIDS affliction in the Eastern region of Ghana and discussed their significance in rural livelihoods. A purposive sample of 32 HIV/AIDS and a random sample of 48 non-HIV/AIDS afflicted rural households were surveyed. Seventy-five crop species consisting of 49 food crops and 26 other species were identified. Seventeen of these species were found in all four home garden types, twelve solely in commercial home gardens in non-HIV/AIDS and six in HIV/AIDS affliction. In non-commercial home gardens only two species were solely found in non-HIV/AIDS and one single species solely in HIV/AIDS affliction. In HIV/AIDS affliction, commercial home gardens were significantly larger, had more species and individual plants, and also had more perennials and species that were harvested throughout the year and evenness was lower compared with non-commercial home gardens. Chemical fertiliser was used in a higher proportion of these commercial home gardens. HIV/AIDS affliction had no effects within the non-commercial home garden category. Within the commercial home gardens HIV/AIDS affliction was associated with a larger home garden, more plants and lower evenness but there were no differences in species richness. Rural households adapt the structure, species composition and management of home gardens to suit their needs and preferences; rural households in HIV/AIDS affliction in cultivating commercial home gardens aim to cultivate crop species to meet subsistence food needs rather than for cash income.

Keywords: External inputs, home garden products, non-commercial home gardens, HIV/AIDS, species composition, species diversity