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## Rising Food Prices in Benin: Changes in Market Interactions of Small Scale Farmers in Atacora-Donga

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### Abstract

The global rise in food prices in 2007 and more intensively in 2008 affected consumers' worldwide, developing countries however, were even affected to a higher extent. In fact Benin's citizens – especially the urban poor consumers – had to accept rising prices of 70 % (local rice) to over 200 % (maize). This prompted the Benin government to several reactions (reduction of import tariffs, establishment of buffer storage), in hope to ensure national food security. Although prices have fallen again during the global economic crisis from mid-2008 on, they remained in 2009 on a higher level. But however the question arises how producers were affected by higher prices of agricultural commodities?

This case study was developed under a broader frame of student GTZ studies among small scale famers in developing countries (*e.g.* Mali, Cambodia and Peru), which aimed to examine economic impacts of risen food prices. It focused on qualitative surveys among rice and maize – two of the most important staple foods in Benin – farmers in the northwestern region Atacora-Donga. The study considered in particular farmers' market participation, as well as their interactions with traders, millers and other persons, who have been involved in local value chains of rice and maize. Did the farmers benefit in the past or the present from the rising food prices or did increasing prices for agricultural input factors offset possible advantages? And to which extent have producers' cultivation behaviour and market interactions been influenced?

The study portrays a detailed picture of different economic reactions and adoption strategies of small scale farmers, which were not only determined by previous market participations, but also influence prospective agricultural investments.

**Keywords:** Benin, market participation, rising food prices