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Food Price Crisis and Rural Livelihoods: Analysis of Livelihoods of Small-scale Farmers in the Republic of Mali

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Abstract

In 2008, the Global Food Price Crisis turned agriculture and food security back into the public, political and scientific debate. Especially the population in Low-Income-Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDC) was threatened by increasing hunger and poverty.

In order to analyse and understand the impact on small-scale farmers livelihoods in the Republic of Mali, a field study was conducted in the Office du Niger, the major irrigation and rice production zone of the country. Major regarded crops are rice and vegetables. Additional the survey considered millet and sorghum farmers who depend on precipitation. Aiming to point out the impacts of rising prices in a bottom-up perspective, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach provided the conceptual framework for an holistic point of view. A great variety of appropriate tool kits and participatory methods has been applied.

The collected data reveals an negative impact of the rising prices among the population. The institutional and political framework show malfunctions and the organisation of the peasants must be called disadvantageous. The drying trend in the region, introducing Climate Change, worsens already insufficient harvesting. The adaptive strategies among the Interviewees mainly consisted of quantitative and qualitative changes in daily nutrition besides sale of livestock and other possessions.

The challenge to reduce vulnerability and strengthen the resilience of small-scale farmers lies in education and formation. Key issues are the improvement of the peasants-organisation and an amelioration in land use. Furthermore innovations and the implementation of further processing ways in order to enhance existing value chains should help to reduce the existing vulnerability.

Keywords: Food Price Crisis, land-use, peasants-organisation, republic of Mali, Small-Scale Farmers, value chains, Vulnerability