



Tropentag, October 5-7, 2011, Bonn

“Development on the margin”

Improving Benefits from Marginal Lands: Contribution of Homegardens to Household Income Generation

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Abstract

Rapid population increase usually results in land fragmentation, over cultivation, reduction of soil fertility and hence poor yields of farms. This exploratory research was conducted to study the contribution of homegardens to household income generation and identify arguments to improve income generation. In Burkina Faso the Bieha district was purposively selected for the study. The initial Rapid Rural Appraisal was complemented by a household survey. Tools of data collection included techniques such as; transect walk, personal observation, key informant interview, and focus group discussion. For the survey, eighty households were selected based on systematic sampling. Data was collected by individual interviews at household level, and for statistical calculations, the households were subsequently categorised as small, medium and commercial based on the size of their homegarden. It was found that all the surveyed households manage homegardens composed of trees, food crops and animals. In terms of homegarden importance to households, 42 % of all respondents said extremely important, 43 % said important while 15 % said not so important. Generally, farms were found to contribute more income than the plant component of homegardens. However, when the livestock component of homegardens was added, homegardens became far more important than farms and accounting for over 60 % of income generation for all categories. Majority of the farmers (43 %) belonged to the small category due to land constraints. Ensuring global food security requires the improvement of intensive production systems such as homegardens which can be practised on marginal lands successfully. It was found that homegarden inputs and outputs increased significantly as homegarden size increased. Small homegardens were found to have the highest input and output per unit area.

It can be concluded that homegardens are very important for food and cash income in this area of marginal lands. Small homegardens record high output per area due to intensive management and hence farmers should be encouraged to also intensively manage their large farms to maximise income generation. The adoption of this type of agroforestry on marginal land can significantly improve income generation by diversifying income sources.

Keywords: Agroforestry, homegarden, Household, Income, Land fragmentation, Population increase