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Rural-Urban Interdependencies in Kyrgyzstan and its Impact on Small-Scale Farming Systems

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Abstract

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the evolvment of some hundred thousand small scale agricultural farms, GDP contribution of Kyrgyzstan's agricultural sector decreased from about 50 % to less than 30 % today, while the commercial and trade-sector in urban areas, like in the capital of Bishkek, increased substantially. Nevertheless, a variety of ties exist between the two sectors which may influence economic sustainability and development of the small-scale agricultural enterprises in Kyrgyzstan. This research study, which is part of two PhD research projects, explores how, and to what extent small-scale agriculture in two typical rural mountain regions is exposed positively or negatively to urban development factors.

Little research has been done on the characterisation of family-based farm-household systems and their inter-dependencies to the urban sector in Kyrgyzstan. Hence, this research study classifies and describes farming systems according to their exposure to urban effects, resource availability and agricultural activities. Quality and extent of rural-urban inter-linkages are explored in terms of labour exchange, capital- and knowledge transfer, differentiated according to different groups of small-scale farming systems.

The research is based on two representative farm-household surveys in the district regions of Naryn and Chui in Kyrgyzstan with stratified random sampling. Multivariate classification of farm-household systems in regard to factors of resource-availability and urban exposure distinguish groups of farming systems. Exploratory and functional interrelations are tested by correlation, respectively regression analysis. Significance of differences between groups of farming systems are explored by ‘Chi-Square-Testing’.

This presentation will show first results on quality, extent and impacts of rural-urban inter-dependencies and review the holistic and interdisciplinary research approach. Future research is expected to examine the economic success of heavily and marginally urban-linked farms-households, explain causes of obstructive and beneficial urban influences, and, finally, discuss possible impacts on national food security and economic development in Kyrgyzstan. Results are planned to feed into development-oriented research by identifying challenges to harmonise rural and urban development in the mountainous areas of Kyrgyzstan.

Keywords: Farm-household systems, mountain regions, urban-rural dependencies