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Local Dynamics and Perceptions of Food Insecurity among Agro- Forestry Family Farms in Ethiopia

TILL STELLMACHER, GIRMA KELBORO

University of Bonn, Center for Development Research (ZEF), Germany

Abstract

About 80 percent of the Ethiopian population depends on small-scale family farming. Family farms account for more than 95 percent of the agricultural production of the country. Agro-forestry plays a significant role for family farms particularly in South-West Ethiopia. The “Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis” (CFVA) published by the Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency and the World Food Program in 2014 defines almost half of the Ethiopian family farms as ‘food insecure’. Findings like this determine policy making and agenda setting for (rural) development strategies and programmes in Ethiopia. Upon this backdrop, this paper shows findings of a study on local dynamics and perceptions of food insecurity among agro-forestry family farms in Yayu area, Oromiya Region, South-west Ethiopia. It is based on household interviews conducted as part of the trans-disciplinary research project “BiomassWeb – Improving food security in Africa through increased system productivity of biomass-based value webs”. The studies’ results contest different food security conceptualisations by providing evidence on the strong and complex dynamics in food insecurity magnitude and quality, as well as showing what Ethiopian family farmers actually understand under ‘food insecurity’.

Most interviewed farmers define food insecurity as a situation in which not all members of a household can eat three times a day. According to this definition, 100 percent of the interviewed farmers said that food insecurity is a problem in their village. 79 percent considered their own household as food insecure. However, this is characterised by strong seasonal and yearly variabilities. The average months in which a household defines itself as food insecure are 3.3 months per year, basically the time before the (main) rainy season.

Keywords: Agro-forestry, Ethiopia , food insecurity, Oromiya Region