



Tropentag, September 16-18, 2015, Berlin, Germany

“Management of land use systems for enhanced food security:  
conflicts, controversies and resolutions”

## Family Agriculture and Land Use in the New Ruralities of Sub-humid Tropics in Central America

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### Abstract

The sustainability and resilience of family agriculture is fundamental to the livelihoods of rural communities and the health of rural landscapes in Central America. Family agriculture encompasses a large diversity of households and farming systems. In this region, farming, land-use systems and livelihood strategies are quickly evolving reflecting closer rural-urban interactions-i.e. new ruralities. The aim of this study was to better understand the interactions between family agriculture (income, food security, production orientation) and farming systems within these new ruralities to better identify future options. A short farm household survey was conducted in 2014 with local partners to almost 800 families in five sites in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. With 14 questions and ca. 40 minutes time, the survey was designed to understand the diversity of farming systems in the region, their main agricultural activities and performance, as well as their main sources and levels of income and food. Results showed that in two sites in Nicaragua where land was still available (average farm size 3 ha) the income of almost half of the households still depended on on-farm activities. In the other sites, average farm sizes drop from 1.4 to 0.7 ha together with an increase dependency on off-farm income. These differences influence the potential risk of family agriculture in terms of income levels and food self-sufficiency. These results also confirm the increasingly rural-urban interaction in family agriculture in Central America. The development of better policy and development programs needs to account for this diversity, as well as the new rurality of family agriculture in the region.

**Keywords:** Food security, household diversity, off-farm income, rural livelihoods, smallholder farming