

RURAL YOUTH AND AGRICULTURE IN THE DRYLANDS OF MIDELT, MOROCCO

REALITIES, VIEWPOINTS, CHALLENGES AND ASPIRATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

- There is a wide consensus in research and development cooperation that more insightful data and knowledge about the highly heterogeneous «social category» of youth in agriculture is needed
- Many dryland regions, above all the Middle East and North Africa, face high youth unemployment and rural outmigration is widespread, however youth are the future of agriculture in rural dryland areas
- Programs and policy interventions need to better account for the specific situations of youth and it must be understood how agriculture as a career and life choice can become more attractive

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- Better understand the livelihoods, choices and decisions of farming youth in the study area
- Based on the current situation, identify options and opportunities in the agricultural sector

SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

- Cover the main agricultural livelihood systems of drylands: pastoral, irrigated and rainfed
- Youth (15-30 years) at the center of the research

MULTI-PERSPECTIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Combining quantitative and qualitative tools
- 106 youth interviews (34 women and 72 men), focus groups, influencer and key informant interviews

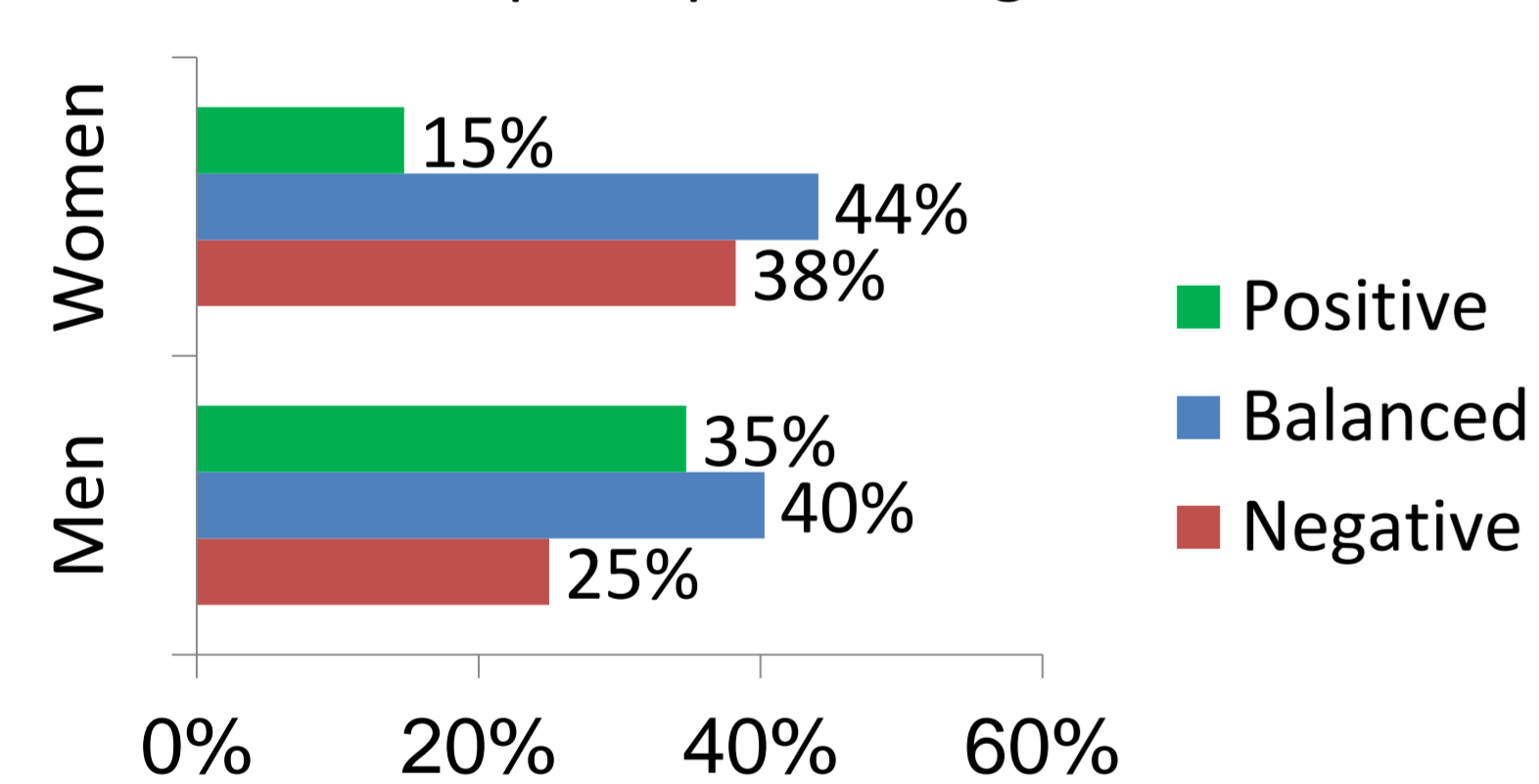


RESULTS AND FINDINGS

REALITIES AND VIEWPOINTS OF YOUTH

- Most youth and their families own very little land
- Working at the family farm (apple, fruit, vegetables, grain) is the most important livelihood priority, but livestock keeping and farm labor are important too
- Very little value addition in agriculture
- Low financial viability of agricultural work
- Youth (particularly female) have little decision making capacity at household and personal level

Youth's perception of agriculture



- Mixed views about agriculture under given conditions
- Migration is a controversial issue but remains an option for many youth

- The use of modern (information and communication) technology (not only by youth) is very limited
- Very few or dysfunctional associations and cooperatives in the villages

IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

- Bad roads and limited transport mean youth are cut out of education and job opportunities, and likewise affect market access of farmers
- Very limited access to (agricultural) training and extension services, no capacity to innovate
- Additional land and microfinancing schemes for farm improvements are not accessible for most
- Strong degradation of natural resources, e.g. land erosion, insufficient water availability

YOUTH ASPIRATIONS: «Village of their dreams»



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- While rural-urban migration was found to be controversial, many youth expressed strong ties to their villages and stated they would like to continue farming in their villages under better conditions
- Youth require better access to education, land, financing schemes, agricultural training and mentorship programs
- Sound, functional institutions (associations, cooperatives) must be established in the communities, social action research is recommended to support youth in formally organizing themselves
- While many youth would like to continue farming, it needs to be taken into consideration that they wish for their children to achieve a high education and quit agriculture in search of better opportunities
- Further research is recommended to analyze the potential of agricultural post-harvest value addition activities