

Introduction

- ❖ Family farming is practiced worldwide, including in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- ❖ In Tamale in Northern Ghana farms are inherited through the paternal line.
- ❖ Farm succession and inheritance in this region interact with land policy.
- ❖ Historically, land scarcity has not constrained African family farming.
- ❖ Recent population increases and urbanisation have changed this trend as lucrative land markets have emerged, having a particular impact on urban and peri-urban farmers (Figure 1).
- ❖ Rapid urbanisation engenders land-use competition between industrial, residential and agricultural users, with resultant decreases in agricultural lands over the last six years (Figure 2).



Fig. 1: Urban vegetable farming, Gumbihini, Tamale

Objective

- ❖ This study draws on empirical ethnographic data collected from Tamale, Northern Ghana to explain the challenges of family farming and its future.
- ❖ This study considers three situations - farming on community land, government irrigation sites and interspaces. The latter refers to undeveloped patches within the urban landscape.

Methods

- ❖ Data was collected through participant observation, interviews and focus group discussions
- ❖ Respondents included farmers, chiefs, officers at the Ministry of Agriculture and the irrigation unit.

Results and Discussion

- ❖ Families farming on community land cannot keep the plot of land in the family indefinitely.
- ❖ Chiefs, the traditional customary custodians, have allodial rights over these lands and therefore ultimately decide who should use them and for how long. The family farming the land have only use rights to it. Thus, chiefs may re-allocate land without their permission, for example to developers.
- ❖ Thus, they may give out a plot of land to another person without the consent of the present user. Thus, even though the customary land tenure system promoted family farming, recent trends show reduction of agricultural land area and of this system of farming in the city (Fig. 2)

Highlights

- ❖ Overlaps and contradictions between customary and state land governance systems have shaped and are still re-shaping farm succession, inheritance and retirement in Northern Ghana.

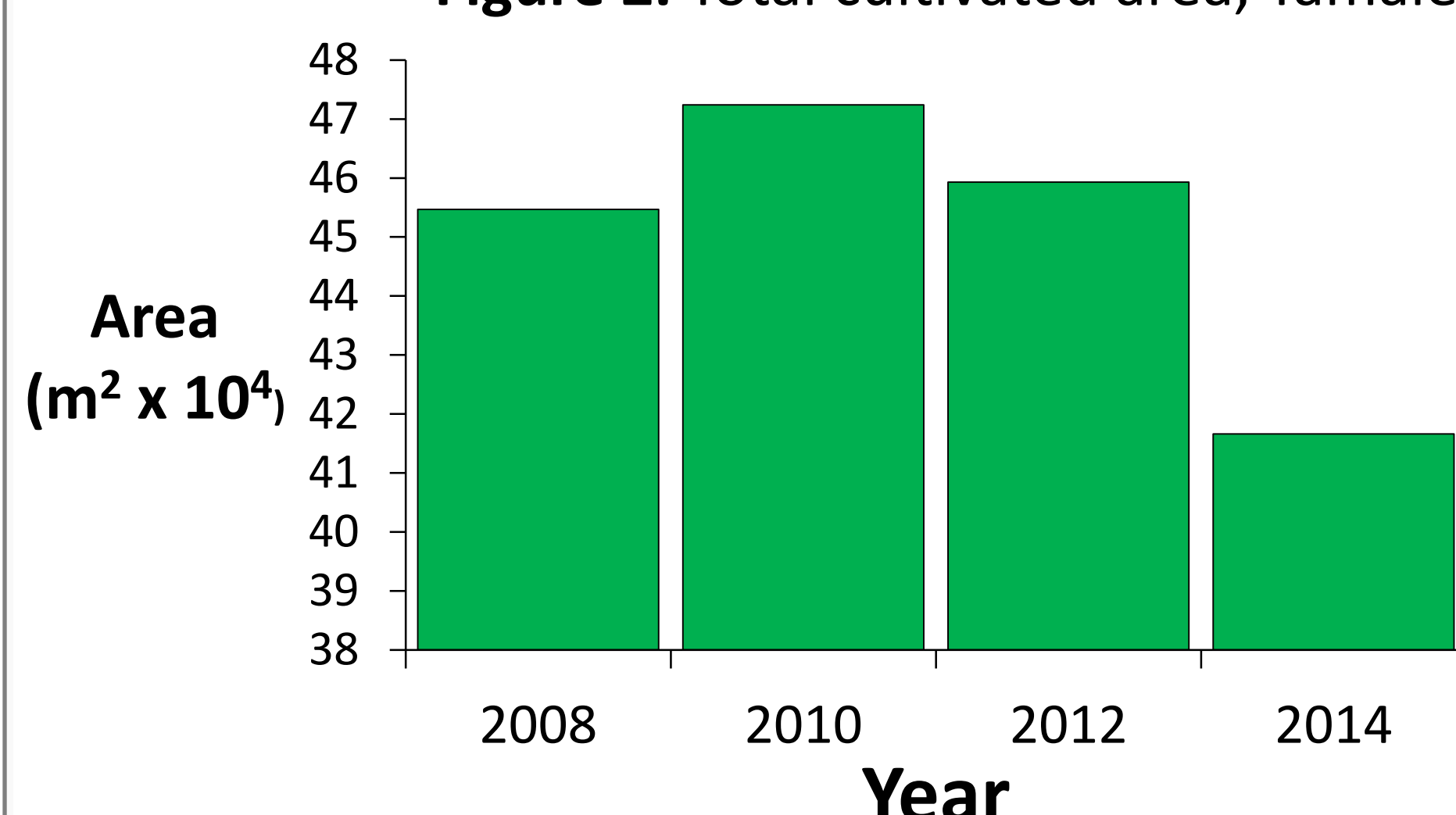


Figure 3. Family farming in Fuo, Tamale

Results and Discussion

- ❖ In government-maintained irrigation sites, farmers are expected to hand over land to irrigation officers after retirement for reallocation to other interested farmers. In practice, they assume the same system as on traditional lands, passing usufruct rights to junior relatives, and thus maintaining their control over these lands.
- ❖ In interspace farming, the legal owner of the land is often a private individual who has purchased it in a market. Alternatively, the plot may be on undeveloped government land. Usufruct of these spaces depends on a good relationship with the owner, but construction and urbanisation makes access to them less secure.

Figure 2. Total cultivated area, Tamale



Conclusion

- ❖ Land policies should make provision for integrating agriculture into urban planning, with consideration for family farming which plays an important role in African livelihoods.

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