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Gender Dynamics in Smallholder Vegetable Production: Insights from Tanzania

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Abstract

The presented study investigates gender dynamics in vegetable producer's households as related to labour, income and expenditure allocation — as field that has not yet been sufficiently covered by research. It is conducted under the “Africa Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation” (Africa RISING) project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). The study focuses on farmers in Babati, Kiteto and Kongwa districts in northern and central Tanzania.

Quantitative data was collected during a survey with 400 male and female farmers in nine villages. Later on, we conducted focus group discussions with sex-separated farmer groups and expert interviews with male and female extension officers. Thus, we validated the quantitative data, investigated on underlying causes for gender inequalities and identified entry points for additional research and development interventions.

The survey results show that men and women have different perceptions of labour, income and expenditure allocation within the households. Following this, the qualitative research revealed that both men and women keep information on their individual income confidential in order to strengthen their position in intra-household negotiations. Moreover, both complain about their partner's lack of contribution to the household economy and production activities. Nevertheless, both qualitative and quantitative data indicate that men have higher income and are in power when it comes to money-related decisions, while women remain economically dependent. Women explain their dependence with men's control of access to land, financial capital, knowledge and markets. Men on the other hand named women's physical limitations and poor money management skills as reasons that prevent them from progressing economically through vegetable farming. Both stated that domestic labour prevents women from getting more involved in farming activities.

The analysis shows that distrust and low cooperation within the households constitute obstacles for food security, poverty alleviation and women empowerment. Therefore, we emphasise the necessity of including men in gender-transformative approaches in agricultural research and development.

Keywords: Gender dynamics, income security, smallholder agriculture, vegetable production, women empowerment

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