



Is Bamboo a Poor Man's Timber in Ethiopia? Employment Prospects of Bamboo among Poor Rural Farm Families.

Habtamu Demilew¹, Bamlaku Alamirew² and Tim K. Loos³

Yom Institute of Economic Development, Research Coordination Unit, 2 Addis Ababa University, Development Studies, Ethiopia 3 University of Hohenheim, Rural Development Theory and Policy (490a),



- Bamboo is one of the most important forest resources in Ethiopia
- land coverage: 1 million hectares (largest in Africa.)
- two varieties (lowland (80%) and highland(20%))
- Uses: source of energy, fodder and construction, input for Small and Micro-Enterprises (SMEs) via forward and backward linkages.
- Its production is a major part of farming system and source of livelihood for rural people.
- Irrespective of such higher potential for both livelihoods enhancement and environmental sustainability, the sector has been overlooked for a long time.
- Yet, attention has been given to the sector since recently.



Data and Methods



- The research mainly used primary data for analysis.
- The sample for the research is drawn from the two-major bamboo growing hot-spots in Ethiopia. Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz
- 486 sample households were randomly selected from these areas.
- Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected.
- Survey questionnaire was the main tool to collect the quantitative data while the qualitative data were collected using FGDs, KIIs and case story narrations.
- Integrated qualitative as well as quantitative analysis techniques.
- The corner solution model developed by Cragg (1971), as an alternative to the Tobit model, is used to analyse the employment contribution of bamboo to the rural smallholder farm households.

Objective



- to provide holistic insights into the current status and future potentials of the bamboo sector to enhance sustainable livelihoods and employment generation amongst poor rural farm families in Ethiopia.

Results



- Findings of the research show that bamboo has a notable contribution to employment among poor rural smallholder farm households.
- Engaging in bamboo is more preferred by poorer rural families with relatively lower resource settings.
- Results also show that entering into bamboo employment is not a problem, yet, employment in bamboo is only subsistence.
- Moreover, market prices of bamboo culms are found to have a significant contribution for both the probability of employment in bamboo as well as for the conditional probability of the variation in the income from bamboo of rural households.
- Employment in bamboo is income elastic and dominated by poorer farm households which have relatively higher share of income from bamboo than others.
- Besides, higher level of income from bamboo has a strong association with better food security status of rural farm households.
- Moreover, the fact that it can be harvested in short cycles makes bamboo the most liquid cash crop for farmers especially in times of short run food shortage.
- These evidences collectively imply that employment in bamboo is a safety-net to meet food security specially among poorer rural families.

The way forward

Areas of intervention to enhance the contribution of bamboo to employment generation and maintain sustainable livelihood among poor rural farm households.

- collective training and capacity building schemes for farmers and artisans,
- distribution of improved bamboo varieties among farmers and
- creating enabling market infrastructure.