

Drivers of agricultural land conversion due to urbanization: Case of smallholder farmers in Kenya

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The process of urbanization is one of the most important drivers of economic, social and physical change in developing countries such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa. Urbanization asserts significant impact on agriculture and food production by competing for resources required for agricultural production. Agriculture being the main source of livelihood and a means of achieving food security is acutely being threatened by the rapid urbanization. Although urbanization of rural-urban fringes creates employment opportunities, better housing, education, knowledge and technology transfer, and ready markets for the agricultural products, it also places enormous stress on natural resources, existing social services and infrastructure. However, the drivers of agricultural land conversion due to urbanization are still not clear. This study examines the extent of agricultural land conversion to non-agricultural purposes using primary data collected through face-to-face interviews from 384 farmers in Njoro Sub-County, Kenya. The study employed Double-hurdle model to determine the drivers of conversion and the extent of agricultural land conversion. The results indicate that there's significant conversion of agricultural land in Njoro Sub-County. The results reveal that decision to convert and extent of land conversion were influenced by; age, gender, education, productive farm assets, distance to town, tenure system, risk attitude, soil fertility and land rented out. The study recommends coherent policies that take into account farmer socio-economic and bio-physical characteristics that could stimulate behavioral change towards land conversion. Policy makers could also adopt strategies that align all stakeholders from different sectors, provide secure rights to land and incentivize solutions for sustainable agriculture by making agriculture more competitive.

Key words: Drivers, urbanization, agricultural land conversion, smallholder, Double hurdle model
