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Gender Relations in Banana Seed Systems in Banana Bunchy Top Disease Affected Communities in Cameroon

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate how gender roles shape varietal preferences and decision-making rights of men and women farmers in banana seed systems value chain in Cameroon. Mixed methods were used to assess access to productive resources, banana productivity, cropping and varietal preferences and decision-making rights between men and women within households in three communities in Ambam District. Sex disaggregated data were collected using quantitative intra-household survey (n= 122) and qualitative tools used included 6 sex-segregated key informant interviews and Focus Group discussions (n=68) and observation. Results showed that household banana production is the main activity of men and women farmers for income and food security. It's is largely collaborative, often on separate fields for men and women. Access to the most fertile land favoured households with indigenous male heads. Site selection for banana production was identified as men's activity supported by women's knowledge. Seed selection was mostly done by women, yet men had better access to seed compared to women farmers. Varietal preferences for both men and women was market-driven and thus, there were no differences in preferred choices between both. In all communities, men had greater ownership and control over production resources. Banana production activity is complimentary for men and women farmers which might form platforms for negotiation, compensation and perhaps non-monetary reward system within households. Shock from Banana bunchy top disease (BBTD) on banana production system is therefore likely to demand the contribution of women's roles in seed selection and crop maintenance, thus, providing an opportunity to access to and benefit-sharing in the banana seed value chain.

Keywords: Banana bunchy top disease, banana seed systems, Cameroon, gender roles